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[ABIATHA BROAD MEETS A FRIEND.]

THE FLAW IN THE DIAMOND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"*Miss Arlingcourt's Will*," "*Leaves of Fate*," &c., &c.

CHAPTER IV.

THE party around the overturned coach looked on with sympathetic interest.

The Rev. Mr. Whitehead made a great deal of talk about his solicitude for his daughter, but the sharp-eyed Quaker fancied he was quite as concerned for the safety of the book she had carried. He certainly left the others of the party to attend to the lifeless girl, while he ran to a clump of bushes, and sought there for the volume she had flung from her with an expression of horror and loathing.

He found it, and came back with it under his arm. Then he lifted her up, as he saw the fluttering breath coming in short gasps.

"My dear child—my sweet Mabel," said the Rev. Mr. Whitehead, his voice being the first sound which came to her wakening ear.

She started up, opening her eyes, and staring into his face. The rest of the party fancied it was the wildness of a bewildered mind, when she put up her hands, as if warding him off, and then with a strong shudder of horror loathing, and despair, sank back sobbing. But the Rev. Mr. Whitehead knew how odious and hateful were the tones of his voice, what bitter despair and hopelessness they brought to that grief-riven heart; and the close-observing Quaker guessed almost as much as the other knew.

Miss Donnithorne had found a gold vinaigrette, and one of the merchants produced his pocket flask of wine. Now that the ugly bonnet and the shrouding veil were removed, one and all perceived what a singularly beautiful face it was, that pale, statuesque countenance, with its Italian eyes, in its framework of glossy tresses, raven black.

She received their attentions quietly, and, as soon as she was able, drew herself away from the reverend gentleman's supporting arm, and rose to her feet.

"Are you sure you are quite strong, my love?" he asked, with an appearance of the utmost solicitude, "you had better sit a little longer, while I help to gather up the bundles at least."

She dropped down heavily, with a look of forced resignation.

"If you are quite yourself, here is your book, you see I have found it for you." And he put the volume into her hand.

The long white fingers closed over it. Her face might have been carved in marble, and could scarcely have looked colder or whiter.

The remainder of the group, perceiving that the lady had recovered, and was able to attend to herself, proceeded to occupy themselves with their own troubles.

"What an unfortunate journey!" ejaculated Miss Donnithorne. "I wonder if I am ever destined to reach the Hall? How long are we likely to be delayed this time?"

"If there's nothing broken, it won't take us an hour to be all right again," answered the driver, from under the coach, which he was examining with sharp scrutiny. "It beats all how that screw got loose and the nut off. I'll take my oath it was all right when I oiled the wheels this morning."

One of the bystanders volunteered the information that a blacksmith's shop was not far distant, and presently the coachman started off in pursuit of him. The rain had fortunately ceased, but the sky was still gloomy, and everything wet and uncomfortable. It was the Quaker who suggested that the ladies should seek shelter in the house beyond, and he led the way for them, the Rev. Mr. Whitehead presently following, while young Aspinwall considered that he was doing the best service in following the coachman to hurry on matters as much as possible.

The mistress of the house was very busy in her kitchen, preparing for a rainy day's thorough work, and was considerably annoyed by this influx of strangers.

Miss Ada Donnithorne, used to obsequious attentions from her inferiors, and flattering adulation from

her own class, was quite indignant at her manner, and walked out of the little front room into which they had been ushered, and remained standing in the porch, watching disconsolately for the appearance of her escort, or the stage.

She who had been thus introduced to them as Mabel Whitehead sat in the chair by the front window, with her head drooping, her eyes closed, and her statuesque features stealed to a look of deep apathy.

The Rev. Mr. Whitehead seemed to prefer making himself agreeable to the fair daughter of Sir Anson Donnithorne, but while he talked for her edification, he promenaded to and fro, keeping watch on that drooping head by the front window.

He saw the Quaker apparently entirely absorbed, with the upheld book hiding his face, and had no suspicion of a little bye-play which was going on directly under his eyes.

For the Quaker, after the reverend gentleman had thus been put at ease, with his book before his face, spoke slowly and quietly, his evenly modulated accents scarcely passing beyond the hearing of the person for whom they were intended.

"Young lady, do not start, nor move, nor open thine eyes. It is plain to see that one yonder is keeping close watch on thee. But thou mayest answer my questions quietly, without arousing suspicion. I am sincerely interested in thee. I wish to be a friend to thee. Dost thou need a friend?"

She had learned self-command in a dutiful school. Not a feature of her face quivered; the voice was low and calm which replied:

"Heaven knows if ever a poor, forsaken, desponding creature had need of a friend, I do at this moment."

"I suspected as much. This man who claims to be thy father is cruel to thee. The work he gives thee to do is hateful to thee," continued the Quaker from behind his book.

She did not reply at once. His furtive glance detected a rapid fluttering at the white throat; the hands were locked in a convulsive clasp.

"My wallet is missing; the young lady's gold watch and chain; and her escort's diamond pin,

though he has not discovered the loss yet. I should not marvel if our comfortable merchants have lost a snug pile of bank-notes, for I discovered the empty pocket-books among the bushes. I am a very humble and quiet individual, but under my Quaker brim is a pair of sharp, observing eyes. I could lay my hand on all the stolen property this moment, as well as thou canst, my dear."

A low sob—a stretching out of the imploring hands.

"You do not believe it is my doing?"

"No, my child, I do not. I saw thee try to escape. I see for myself the tyrannical rule the man holds. Besides, I know him. His parson's clothing and his blue spectacles have not been thorough enough disguise. I know the man, and of how much villainy he is capable."

"You know him! Then, indeed, I need give no explanations. Oh, sir, think how terrible it is for me to be so in his power."

"Is he really thy father?"

"He declares it; but every drop of blood in my veins rises up in indignant refutation of the assertion. If he is, he has forfeited every natural claim in the sight of heaven, if not by law. I never saw him until two years ago, never knew there was such a person in existence, although I have dim remembrances of having seen him somewhere in my childhood."

"And thou wishest to escape from his evil clutches?"

"As I wish for life, breath, sunlight," was the low, passionate reply.

"Good; thou shalt have my help. It is right that I should be the one to help thee outwit him."

"And can I hide away from his search, if once I escape?" she asked, "what can I do, a helpless woman?"

"Women are not helpless," said the Quaker, "they have a quicker brain, livelier perceptions, keener wit than man. All they need is man's energetic will. But it does not matter for that. I am all alone. I should bless heaven for a daughter's companionship. Thou needest a parent's care and love. I think heaven ordained this chance meeting of ours, that we should be of mutual help to each other. Once in my house thou art safe, and if thou canst be content with a quiet, honest home, thou shalt be happy."

"Oh, it will almost seem a heaven," she answered, "surely it is heaven which sent you."

"Hush, the man is coming; his evil, wary eye is upon thee. Have no fear. I will find an opportunity to speak with thee again."

The Rev. Mr. Whitehead came close to the window and looked in.

"There is a prospect of relief," he said, "we hear the sound of the coach wheels."

The Quaker laid down his book, and walked out to him.

"Thou bringest welcome tidings," he said, "I have missed my train, but mayhap I shall find conveyance beyond."

"Then you are bound beyond Paxinham?" asked the other, carelessly.

"Thou art right in thy conjecture, I am bound beyond," was the calm reply.

"And here is the coach. Let us hope there will be no fresh disaster, for it seems to be a truly unfortunate journey. Come, my daughter, we will not make a moment's delay for them."

The pale Mabel came forth, with her veil lowered again to conceal her face, the book under her arm.

And once more the party were safely started upon their journey. The driver made all possible haste, sharing his passengers' impatience, when he remembered the waiting soldiers. The horses trotted away with good spirit, and presently the clouds parted, and allowed a rift of sunshine to break out, which speedily cleared a broad space of blue sky, and then all things seemed transfigured, and were so beautiful that it was impossible for the little party to help brightening likewise.

The Rev. Mr. Whitehead alone was silent and grave. He put his hand presently to his head, and said in a low aside, which was, however, audible to all the rest:

"I am afraid I am not going to get off so easily as I thought, Mabel. My head aches very much, and I am almost certain one of my old attacks is coming on. If there be any resting-place hereabout, I must stop the night."

They were in a small village when he spoke; a moment after, they saw a tall sign over the trees.

"Ah! there is the very refuge I desire!" exclaimed he, again putting his hand to his head; he leaned out of the window, and spoke to the driver.

"Are you going to stop here?"

"No, sir. No time to lose."

"I won't detain you a moment. I am ill, and must have rest. Just let me out here."

Of course, Sam Lear pulled up his horses, and came to a dead stop.

Mr. Whitehead gathered up his few packages, and turned to his daughter.

"Come, Mabel."

She arose to her feet, and stood a moment, looking irresolutely from the door, to the corner where the Quaker was feeling in his hat.

He reached forward suddenly, and lifted her scarf.

"Thou hast caught thy scarf in the seat."

As he put it into her hand, he slipped in likewise a tiny roll of paper. Her fingers closed over it, and without any farther delay she followed her conductor, who handed some money to the driver.

"That is all right, my good fellow. I won't wait for any change. I must get myself into a bed, as quickly as possible. A pleasant journey, friends, the rest of your trip."

He turned as he spoke, the young woman following quietly, and hurried into the little inn.

Sam Lear snapped his whip again, the horses dashed on, and away rolled the coach.

"A very agreeable man, that Mr. Whitehead," observed Mr. Smith, the linen draper, "but I must say the young lady was odd enough!"

"Thou dost not judge of thy merchandise by the outside of the chest, if I mistake not," said the Quaker, quietly.

"Pretty much so, if the brand is on the outside," was the answer.

"Then are our Chinese friends honest men than their civilised neighbours. I fear much our merchandise would need to be examined to the very core."

"Oh, look at those trees with the sun shining over them," exclaimed Miss Donnithorne, "everything seems strung with diamonds."

The young gentleman admired, and then following the train of thought suggested by her words, put one hand up to his shirt-frill.

His face crimsoned suddenly, though he tried to appear calm and indifferent.

"Well, at least, my diamonds have disappeared, if they have not dissolved as will those of the rain-drops yonder."

"You have lost your breast-pin!" said one of the tradesmen, sympathisingly.

"Yes, it seems so; it must have been when waiting for the coach."

"It is singular, very!" observed Mr. Brown, thinking comically. "What careless creatures these young people are. A gold watch and a diamond pin lost in a stage-coach-ride of twenty miles."

The Quaker smiled satirically, but kept silence a little farther, then he spoke.

"I believe I shall get out myself. My wallet had nothing very valuable in it, still I will see what has become of it."

"Your wallet!" exclaimed the others.

And now Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith began to examine for themselves, turning out all their pockets.

"By George! Brown, my pocket-book is gone, as sure as you are born."

"St. Christopher! what sorcery is this? I have neither wallet, nor cheque-book. There has been no losing—it is robbery. We have had a pickpocket amongst us."

"When the coach upset," exclaimed the young gentleman, "there were rough-looking fellows about us."

"But my watch was gone before that," said Miss Donnithorne, dubiously.

"The driver, do you think it is he?" questioned Mr. Smith, growing excited. "I can tell him it will not be left unaided."

The Quaker shook his head.

"Friends, if ye choose to leave the matter to me, I feel confident that I shall be able to send the missing articles back to ye all. I do not believe the driver has escaped himself, if he were unfortunate enough to have money in his pocket. Our friend, Mr. Whitehead, was among us all."

"Mr. Whitehead—oh no!" exclaimed one and all, indignantly.

"I should sooner accuse you," said the young man, bluntly.

"I am open to thy search. Thou wilt find a little roll of money in an inner pocket. I took care to remove it from my wallet, after the watch was lost. For the rest thou mayest look as long and searchingly as thou pleasest, but begin at once, for I would fain make haste to go back, and look after the Rev. Mr. Whitehead."

"By Jove! I can't believe it!" ejaculated Mr. Smith. "Let's see what the driver will say."

Whereupon they stopped the coach, the driver was called, and the circumstances laid before him. His consternation and distress were too genuine to be doubted. He wished to drive back at once, for singularly enough he was the only one who shared

the Quaker's suspicions. But Miss Donnithorne looked so distressed at the prospect of any farther delay, notwithstanding the prospect of recovering her watch, that, after a hasty consultation, it was determined to intrust the Quaker with the management of the case. He took leave of the rest of the party with his unruffled smile, and while the stage proceeded, turned round to retrace his path.

"I shall send down a detective the moment I reach home, to take up the case," Mr. Smith had said to him.

He shook his head slowly.

"Friend Smith, thy detective will only spend more of thy money. The Rev. Mr. Whitehead is a wily man. Nevertheless send him down. I will leave with the landlord of the inn such evidence as I may chance upon."

As he walked along, he muttered:

"Aye, there is a better detective than money can bribe to the service already on the track. James Storm, thou dost not dream what eye is following every movement of thine!"

CHAPTER V.

THE Honourable Morley Ashton, mounted on a magnificent black horse, was riding slowly through the principal promenade of Chardon Valley. On either side he received respectful, or eager greeting. The labourer, wheeling his barrow, took off his hat, with a smile of heartfelt pride and satisfaction at the kindly bow returned to him. The gentleman, riding in his coach, leaned out with more familiar, but quite as eager and respectful, salutation. The lady, with the footman in livery behind her carriage, flushed with pleased recognition at his approach, and smiled upon him graciously.

He checked the impatient animal near an unfinished building, where the carpenters and masons were busy at work, and beckoned an old man, who was filling his hod with bricks, towards him. The man, threadbare at the elbows, and patched at the knees, came towards him, his dingy straw hat in his hand.

"I am very glad to tell you, John Prior, that there are strong hopes of your son's release from the service. I've written to his lordship about it, and yesterday he sent me his promise to do the best he can for us. So keep up a good heart, John."

"Oh, your honour, it's well I should, when a great gentleman like you takes so much pains for me. Indeed, sir, I can only bless you; but if the boy gets home again, he'll know it's your doing, and you'll only have to speak the word to command him to anything. He'll be a slave to your honour."

Mr. Ashton only smiled, and bowed. He had urged the horse a little farther, towards a group in the centre of which was a stout, manly young fellow, with a carpenter's square in his hand.

"George Bliss, come here a minute."

George came, his face flushed with proud delight at the great man's condescension.

"George," said Mr. Ashton, in a low voice. "I saw you down at the 'Kings Arms' last night, in bad company. Look out for yourself, I beg of you. I don't want to lose my good opinion of you, nor to see your poor old mother hanging her head in shame. It's a thing that gets a giant's hold of the best of us, before we know it. My dear fellow, keep clear of the tap-room, if you mean to come up where we all expect to see you."

The honest face was crimsoned with shame, but the answer came fearlessly.

"Thank you, sir. I didn't see any danger, but I won't risk it. I'm thankful to you, sir, for your goodness in caring for a poor fellow like me."

Then the black horse moved on again, and Morley Ashton did not pause until there was another similar appeal.

"I sent the doctor down to your place, Martin," said Mr. Ashton, pulling up beside a collier. "That little girl of yours is too sweet and pretty to be risked through the fever without a physician. And I told the housekeeper to send a basket of fruit and jellies. Will you see, when you go home, that old Peter at the next door, had a part of it? He told me he had no appetite."

"The Lord bless him!" cried the collier, looking after him as he rode away. "There isn't a woman in the place has such a tender heart, or thinks so much about doing good to the poor."

Then Mr. Ashton went down to the factory, and passed all through its tiresome, tedious, disagreeable departments, to test the quality of the air in which the operatives worked.

"Briggs," said he, putting his head into the counting-house, "you'll give those hands in the lower rooms a shilling a-piece extra for to-day. Their work is unusually dirty and disagreeable; there must be something done to purify the material, and give better ventilation in that basement."

"But I don't hear any complaint from them, sir."

"I daresay not, poor souls, they've been out of the pure air so long, they don't discover the closeness. Let's make it up to them in money, to-day. I will go to Braxton myself to see his new ventilator, this week certainly."

"Such a man!" comments Briggs. "I wonder if there was ever another mill-owner who took so much pains, and had such feeling for his hands?"

So one and all looked after him with wonder, admiration, and blessing.

Do not think Morley Ashton was ignorant of this fact. On the contrary, notwithstanding that gravity of manner, and seeming unconsciousness, he caught up every look and word of honour and respect, treasured it up, and fed upon it.

This morning as the black horse turned back from the long list of fulfilled duties, it was stopped by a pretty little basket phaeton, with a pair of milk-white ponies.

The footman made way for him, and Morley Ashton rode to the carriage-door, where a lady in a black velvet mantle, all lace and bugles, with pale brown braids, and light blue eyes was bending out.

"Oh, Mr. Ashton, how do you do? I'm so glad to see you."

"Good morning, Lady Harriet, I trust you are all well at Donnithorne Hall. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I'm almost ashamed to ask, but you know I've no confidence in my own judgment, and Sir Anson has remained in town, and disappointed me so much. You see Ada is coming home to-day, and I ordered of Monson down here a new set of jewellery—I want it to surprise her with. She is to find it on her dressing-table, you know; the man has a new case down from London, and I am so foolish, so exceedingly foolish, that I cannot decide between three sets. It is so trying!"

"Very trying indeed!" responded Morley Ashton, laughing heartily, "may you never find yourself in a more disagreeable dilemma, Lady Harriet. If I can assist you with my poor judgment."

"Ah, that is the very thing, Mr. Ashton; your taste is unexceptionable. If you would be so very good as to come down to Monson's with me, and tell me which will be most becoming to Ada. It will be such a relief to me, and I know how much she values your judgment."

And presently, Mr. Ashton, was seated on Monson's velvet couch beside her ladyship, with the satin-lined tray of jewels in his lap.

"There, solve the question for me, Mr. Ashton; no one ever appeals from your decisions. Shall Ada find waiting for her these opals with the embroidered setting, or the pearls and sapphire, or this ruby fuchsia, with its diamond tongue?"

He took them up separately, and gave to each the same serious attention he had bestowed upon the machinery, or the ventilation theory.

"Opals and emeralds are too old for one of Miss Ada's blossoming youth," said he, softly, while he laid the first case aside. "But pearls are always beautiful and their milky gleam will only rival the pure, fair complexion. Then the sapphire will give just such a violet tint as her eyes, when they darken, and flash with their own peculiar charm. These are very beautiful, and eminently suitable, Lady Harriet."

"Yes, I thought so. But look at those fuchsias. They are such loves. I cannot bear to leave them."

She lifted the eardrop, which was a perfect copy of the graceful flower, made of rubies, with a swinging tongue of diamonds, which lent a singular charm to the whole, by lighting up the burning gems as with an inward flame.

"Miss Ada could wear these also," he said, admiring them to her thorough satisfaction. "I can fancy how they would enhance the pink and white of her cheek, and brighten with her flashing smile. Indeed, Lady Harriet, I am quite in your dilemma. I cannot choose between them. I have, however, bethought me of a way to solve the difficulty. You shall purchase the fuchsias, and the pearl and sapphire shall be my mother's gift, and we shall enjoy seeing each in such becoming ownership."

"Ah, but I am afraid—" began Lady Harriet, and there stopped.

The shopkeeper had discreetly stepped aside. Morley Ashton was led to speak impulsively for once.

"My dear Lady Harriet, you are aware it may still be a mother's gift. You know my mother's hopes. I am sure you have seen mine. Give me the pleasure of seeing these pearls adorning your daughter's beauty."

And Lady Harriet, more than pleased, jubilant and triumphant for her own as well as Ada's sake, took both cases in her hand.

Monson came forward with a little box in his hand.

"Will your ladyship take a look at this diamond

I obtained the other day? Note its wonderful purity and brilliancy; its size also."

"Ah, but what is that ugly line across it? How it spoils the whole gem."

"Yes, that is the pity, it is a flaw that no cutting can remove. If it were not for that flaw the gem would have gone among the jewels presented to our young princess on her wedding-day. Were the whole unmarred it would be worth a small fortune. I take it out everyday, and mourn over it; it would be so perfect but for that. If it were a common pebble it would not matter, but it is no small thing to have a flaw in a diamond; one is almost ready to weep thinking of it."

"Let me see it," said Morley Ashton, and something in his voice made the listeners look up quickly into his face. If it were paler, colder, and more statuesque than ever, that was all they saw.

He took the diamond in his hand, and went towards the window to hold it in the light, and stood there with his back to them.

"Monson," said he when he came back, "I am glad you showed me the gem. You must make it up for me into a ring, a ring for myself. Measure my finger now."

"You mean for me to cut it in two, or do you think I could fasten some little gold ornament over the flaw? I was puzzling over it the other day. It seems such a pity to reduce the size."

"You are to set it safely and plainly. Leave the flaw as it is. It is the secret charm; it will be my signet ring, so you may make the setting into a shield."

"Oh, Mr. Ashton, you are the last person to wear that diamond. You ought to have a perfect gem, if ever a mortal has one," interposed Lady Harriet.

He smiled gravely, a little sadly; but the hand behind him clenched itself till purple edged the delicate nails.

The purchases concluded, the pair left the shop. Mr. Ashton saw the lady into her carriage, then mounted his own horse, and putting spurs to him rode furiously home.

Once he put up his gloved hand, and dashed it across his forehead as if wiping off some clinging miasma.

"Aye," he muttered, "even so—a flaw in the diamond!"

And a little while after, as if fascinated by the thought, he repeated again slowly, but with bitter emphasis:

"A flaw in the diamond."

Miss Ada Donnithorne arrived safely that evening, minus her watch and chain, and considerably fatigued. The next day, however, she was as fresh and bright as a rose with the dew still on. Mr. Morley Ashton, however, did not call. He had posted off thirty miles to look at a building noted for its perfect ventilation, that he might have something done forthwith for the basement of his factory. It was like him to go, though he knew that his lady-love had arrived home. Not that she was out of his thoughts. All the way of his rapid ride he had the picture before him, of the bright young face with its girlish bloom, and its golden curls, with the pearl and sapphire ornaments, his gift, setting off its beauty. Sometimes he smiled over the thought, his face lighting up into a wondrous charm, and again he shivered and frowned.

Miss Ada Donnithorne did not meet him until the second day of her return, and then it was at the fancy fair.

Lady Harriet, who was always fussy and impatient, had started off before it was really time, and being one of the leading lady managers, she had left her daughter near one of the stalls, and gone off with her friends to look after the arrangements.

Miss Ada, who had never been allowed at such a place before, found plenty of amusement in watching the transactions within, and now and then looking after the arrivals without. When she began to be weary of this, a friend of her mother's sat down by her to rest.

"Who is that exceedingly stylish-looking lady in the lemon coloured silk?" asked Ada Donnithorne; "what a very handsome person!"

"That? oh, that is Miss Ophelia Armitage, a noted London belle. She has made a great deal of sensation in her time. The prince danced with her twice in one evening. She is visiting at Lady Thorpe's."

Miss Ada, fresh from the trammels of the school-room, looked at the elegant belle with a sentiment something akin to awe. And when the good lady took her departure, and left the bench vacant, she was not only flattered, but keenly interested to see the same lady with her chaperone come sailing along in that direction, and actually sink into the seat before her.

"We came too early," said Miss Armitage, fluttering her fan. "Do you know, Sophia, I'm afraid I

shall be dull, while you are in your stall. I don't see many people who look of any consequence. Ah, there is a fine figure—a perfect centaur! Do let me see his face."

She pointed, with lemon-kid fingers, lightly, and Ada Donnithorne smiled to see Mr. Morley Ashton.

"Oh, Sophia, there's the finest gentleman I've seen this long time! Who is he?"

"The Honourable Morley Ashton, the especial pride and pet of the shire, you may say."

"A member of Parliament? I think I have heard of him. Lord Clive said he was destined to be a powerful leader. Is this the man? He seems too young, and yet, when I look, he has no air of youth either. Bless me, Sophia, you mustn't tell me the man is married, for I am calling all my force into the field!"

And the belle shook her head, till the twinkling diamonds hanging at the delicate ear outflashed her eyes.

"He isn't married, certainly, but they do say the engagement is all arranged."

"Ah, despair! Who is she?"

"A daughter of Sir Anson Donnithorne. I don't know the Donnithornes at all, but I was told the girl was still at school."

"Bah! a mere schoolgirl. If it be not a marriage of convenience, for family reasons, I am no wise daunted. I shall enter the lists—I shall throw down the gage. You must get me an introduction, Sophia. What an Apollo he is!"

Now every word of this flippant talk was like an edict of imperial authority for Miss Ada, who looked up with newly-opened eyes, as Mr. Ashton came slowly into the enclosure.

"He is very handsome, certainly, and so grand and distinguished!" she thought. "I will show the lady what a schoolgirl can do."

And with all the coquetry of her vain little heart brightening her cheeks, and shining in her eyes, she rose up, came forward a little, fluttering her handkerchief.

Morley Ashton saw her. His whole face lighted up, the coldness and sternness vanishing the sweet intoxication of her glad smile, her beaming eyes stealing into every nerve and fibre of his being.

He hurried to her side with outstretched hands.

"My dear Miss Ada—I am so pleased to find you."

"And I am so glad to see you, Mr. Ashton," responded Ada; "it is so dull here, and I dare not promenade alone. Nobody knows what has become of mamma."

The golden curls were shaken, and the blue eyes looked up to his with all the charm of childish innocence, and girlish enjoyment.

Morley drew the little hand through his arm.

"Let me see what I can do to entertain you," he said, and they went slowly away, talking, smiling, enjoying everything.

She, leaning lightly on his arm, arching her pretty neck, tossing her curls, and practising many a little graceful art, her cheeks a warm carmine, her eyes outshining sapphire, but finding time to turn now and then and glance towards the discomfited lemon silk with a triumphant, mental ejaculation.

"A school-girl indeed! She shall see what a school-girl can do."

And so half that Morley Ashton believed to be innocent delight in his society was really and truly but coquettish triumph over the famous London belle.

At all events, the little accident brought matters to a crisis. While they sat in a woodland bower, her hands filled with pretty trifles, a tray of cakes and loaves before them, almost before he knew it, Morley Ashton had made his declaration, and Ada flattered, triumphantly conscious of complete success, had faltered something about papa's wishes.

And he had managed to keep the little white hand in his, even to steal the first lover-kiss before discreet Lady Harriet looked in upon them, and was made thoroughly happy by the news. She sought Lady Constance, to share her delight, and the two mothers exchanged jubilant congratulations.

Ada, still under the excitement and novelty, was blushing and happy; but there came presently a shadow across the lover's forehead, and the glow faded off his face.

"She must have a ring," he said, inwardly. "Alack, alack! If I were fair and honest, I should give her the one with a flaw in the diamond."

CHAPTER VI.

ABIATHA BROAD, the Quaker, was yet within half a-mile of the inn towards which the Rev. Mr. Whitehead had directed his steps, and was hurrying along swiftly when his attention was arrested by the crack of a whip and the rapid dash of wheels, to a carriage just turning into the cross road which in-

intersected this main street on which he was travelling.

A very grand looking equipage it was, glittering with silver trappings, polished ebony and plate-glass, and the coachman was dressed in a costly livery. His careless glance showed him a haughty-looking gentleman, with iron-gray whiskers, a pair of gold-bowed glasses, and a very rich fur cloak thrown over his shoulders. A lady, dressed with corresponding richness, and a young gentleman sat on the opposite seat. The Quaker, as I have said, gave them a careless glance, and was passing on with merely a passing thought about some people being born to ride in fine coaches, and others for ever condemned to trudge afoot, when his attention was a second time arrested. The lady half bent out towards him, and flinging up her rich lace veil with one hand, with the other she scattered out upon the roadside a little tuft of scarlet fringe.

The Quaker started forward the moment he saw it, and re-examined the occupants of the carriage. His sharp gray eyes glistened with something beyond astonishment.

"Upon my word, Rev. Mr. Whitehead, thou hast blossomed out into a fine gentleman in a short time," he ejaculated, "thou hast made a good exchange for the old stage, and recovered from thine illness in good season. But for the girl's signal, I should have passed without mistrusting it was a wolf under such fine feathers. A coachman and a young gentleman—now indeed the odds are against me, and it will require shrewd management to make good my promise to the girl! She is as unhappy in the fine coach, it seems, as she was in the old stage. Well, it is a work I have set myself to do, and there must somehow be found a way. I do mistrust that I shall be obliged to call upon Friend Aaron for his assistance."

The words were scarcely uttered before the eyes that were still following the cloud of rising dust which marked the progress of the coach, caught a view also of a tall, gaunt figure, mounted on a high gawky white horse, coming along the same road.

"Aaron Peasey himself. He is here just in the nick of time."

And he hurried on to meet the horseman, who came on with drooping head, and only lifted it when the Quaker, with an amused smile on his face, planted himself in the way.

The white horse was jerked up in great haste.

"Friend, thou must keep thyself out of the road, or—why—Abiatha Broad, is it thee? White-ear had nearly tumbled over thee. When didst thou come to these parts? Thee will go home with me."

"Just now, Aaron, I am in great haste. Thou hast been a good friend to me in times past, and knowest well that I appreciate it. Didst thou note the carriage on the road, a fine carriage, with a lady and two gentlemen?"

"I did, Abiatha, because I happen to know whose it was. The man bought the horse of me. He keeps the carriage to let, in the town below, and for that it caught my notice. White-ear whinnied as we passed, so wonderful is the dumb creature's remembrance of the colt who shared the stall near him."

"Aaron, I am going to ask a great favour of thee. I know how White-ear holds the next place in thy heart after the good Rachel, but I must ask thee to let me have him; I want to follow on the track of that carriage. It is of the utmost importance that I do not lose sight of it. White-ear can keep up, I know."

"Of course he can," laughed Aaron, the Quaker, galling the neck of the ungainly-looking beast. "White-ear is none of the sleek, handsome creatures that tire after a mile's decent pace. He can wear out the fastest animal in the country. Let them try to get away who can."

"And wilt thou lend him to me? Thou know'st I will not abuse him, knowing how he is like a human creature to thee rather than a dumb beast," asked Abiatha Broad, eagerly. "I will send him back by a trusty messenger, if I cannot come myself."

The other had his arm stretched over White-ear's neck with the fondness of an embrace.

"Thou tellest me it is of vital importance?"

"Yes; the safety, the happiness, one does not know but that the honour and life of a persecuted fellow-being depends upon it."

"Then thou shalt have him. Mount, friend Abiatha, and speed on thy way. Thou wilt not need the whip. Lay the reins so, and speak low to him, and White-ear will do his best. Dost thou hear, White-ear? Abiatha Broad is a friend. Thou must do as well by him as by thy master."

"I would thou couldst follow on to the town, and be near if I needed help," said Abiatha, while he mounted into the saddle, which the other had vacated. "It is a desperate villain with whom I may contend."

"Thou must not contend to violence. Trust rather to White-ear to bear thee out of trouble. It may be possible thou wilt see me about the town. There is a short wood-path thou mightest take, just below the hill, which will give a half-mile's gain over a carriage."

"I shall need it," said Abiatha, and he shook the rein.

The sagacious White-ear stood a moment arching his neck, looking back discontentedly to where his master stood. He did not relish leaving his good friend to walk, while he bore away the stranger.

"Go, White-ear," said the master, quietly. "Thou should'st not need my second bidding."

And the gray horse shook his head, gave a short whinny—a dumb farewell—and, with those great strides of his, went loping along, retracing his steps over the road he had just cleared.

The Quaker found the wood-path without difficulty, and took occasion, while threading its shaded, solitary track, to pull out from his capacious pocket, a thin light overcoat for summer wear, and a soft cloth-cap.

Putting on these, and leaving behind the snuff-coloured Quaker coat, and the broad-brimmed hat, made quite a different-looking individual of him. He urged White-ear to his best pace, and came out, as he had hoped, ahead of the coach. He saw it behind, coming up the hill, the horses looking fagged and weary.

"Friend Aaron, it was a providence sent thee and White-ear into my path to-day," he muttered, while he patted the animal's neck. "They won't think of suspecting they are watched by a man ahead; nor will the Rev. Mr. Whitehead be likely to discover the Quaker, still less the identity behind the Quaker. I think I may boldly keep the track, and put up at the same stopping-place. Those horses can't go at a great way, and it is some distance yet to the nearest station. They will be likely to put up at the 'Elkhorn,' in A—"

And he went cantering at a steady pace, allowing the coach to gain a little, and presently stopping at a water-trough, he gave it time to come up.

"Do you know how near to this I can find an inn?" asked Mr. Abiatha Broad, of the coachman, in an entirely different voice from that the passengers in the stage had heard, and dropping his thee's and thou's without much trouble.

"There's the 'Elkhorn' in A—" was the reply. "We are going there ourselves."

"Thank you. I shall be after you, there," returned the horseman, rejoicing at receiving just the reply he desired.

(To be continued.)

DRESS WORSHIP.

WHAT is the source of that mysterious unanimity which seems to regulate the minutest details of feminine adornment, and which is never more conspicuous than when its results are most eccentric? Who speaks the word which makes short skirts indispensable one month and impossible the next? Who was it that in June last laid down the hard and fast line of eighteen inches for a presentable girl's waist? Why did every woman with any pretension to style think it necessary to go about in July, receiving all the filth of a London atmosphere upon her head, and retaining it there for six days out of the seven? What, in short, is it that makes a woman reject any costume or head-dress, however neat and individually becoming it may be, because it is not the last new thing, whilst she is ready to adopt any novelty, however vulgar or dirty or unbecoming to her own personal appearance? Where does that mysterious power reside which requires our women to be all attired in uniform, though it is continually changing that uniform? Who, in short, sets the fashions? and why do women follow them?

The British spirit of funkism is such a convenient balloon to raise the aspiring tradesman to the seventh heaven of profits, and the inflation of it is so thoroughly in accordance with the genius of Bond Street, that the haberdashers will never suffer it altogether to collapse. Little Miss Dumpty still buys a Watteau hat, which she does not want, and sticks it on the top of her squat little person, which it does not become, because the Siren and the Adonis of the great shop assure her that the Empress is wearing one at Biarritz, or that the Princess of Wales has ordered one at Sandringham. But in believing this, if she does believe it, Miss Dumpty sins against light. She ought to know, as well as the Siren and Adonis, that the Empress does not dictate the fashions, that the last new things have not really her sanction, and, indeed, that she is as often unfashionably as fashionably dressed. As for our own Court, whatever may be its shortcomings, it is at least free from the charge of stimulating our countrywomen, by its example, to reckless expenditure on dress. Few European sovereigns have renounced more com-

pletely than Queen Victoria the exercise of that royal function, leadership in the race of fashionable extravagance; and in spite of the clamours of the London tradesmen, and their refined mouth-piece Mr. Bearden, the bulk of the nation feels grateful to her Majesty for having done her best to make economy respectable.

The real truth, of course, is that the fashions are mere pretexes invented by the art of the clothes-monger and haberdasher for making fortunes out of the folly of women. The part which empresses, princesses, marchionesses play in "setting the fashions" is a very subordinate one; the principal actor in the shifting scene is really the enterprising tradesman. He stands behind the curtain and pulls the strings which move the puppets. He has learnt in the practical school of commercial competition to study and to foster certain characteristic foibles of women—their instinct of imitation, and their love of change. His agents ransack the markets to procure him novelties, and as fast as he gets them he turns them to account. He knows that "the ladies of England are divided into two classes—those who are, and those who are not, favoured by fortune;" and this, according to his rendering, means "those who are, and those who are not, able to be grossly extravagant in dress." The first of these classes he tempts through the love of novelty, pandering to their eternal craving for something different from that which they and their less "favoured" neighbours have got. In each London circle, and in each country town, he finds a certain number of the "favoured," who take his tempting baits very freely. Some of the gayest, the most beautiful, the most fashionable, or the most aristocratic of these he uses as his stalking-horses, with which he may approach the smaller and shyer game. And it is this privilege of playing, in some instances, the part of stalking-horse to the adventurous tradesman, which is the only relic now left to the aristocracy of their former real or fabulous leadership in costume. This is the only respect in which they can now be said to set the fashions. The game, once opened, goes merrily forward. No soon is the last new thing snapped up and exhibited by some "favoured" one, than the fever of bell-wetherism seizes on all the rest of the tribe. They follow like sheep in the track of the leader, still achieving, still pursuing, some pressing close upon her heels and others fairly distanced, but all faithfully following, all contributing to swell the gains of the happy haberdasher.

ZADKIEL OF 1869.—The infallible foreteller of the times to come, the famous Zadkiel, has looked into next year and gives us a depressing account of our prospects. Saturn is very hard on Spain and Hungary through nearly all of the year. In May "Mars is still in Leo, afflicting Rome, and in some degree France also, while Saturn, retrograde in Sagittarius, afflicts Spain with many troubles." Royalty is impartially singled out for misfortune all over Europe. In February, Abdul-Aziz "has a bad transit;" and the Emperor of Austria "suffers from violence next." In May the King of Hanover has "the moon joined with Saturn, at his birthday"—a very bad sign. Two months later the King of Prussia is to "meet trouble by the death of a female," the King of Italy being at the same time threatened with Saturn, and doubts being expressed whether the Pope will live till the end of the year. Even our own Royal family does not escape. Zadkiel observes that "the Prince (apparently the Prince of Wales) has M.C. square Saturn. These are very serious, and I judge very serious consequences, which I do not feel at liberty to explain more fully. If astrology were believed in, as I believe in it, these consequences might be avoided;" so that perhaps much depends on the circulation of the almanack this year. Again, on the 9th Nov. "the opposition of Jupiter to the sun, at the birthday of a well-beloved prince, will affect the state of his blood, which becomes inflamed and too abundant." Almost the only gleam of good fortune allowed is that "Jupiter, in trine to the place of her moon at birth, will confer strength and health on the Princess of Wales, about the 21st of March." A conjunction of the planets in June ensures trouble in London and elsewhere, and "may produce shocks of earthquake." Moreover, it seems to denote a "fall from power of the Ministry in this country." In November, besides misfortunes to Royal Princes, the "roughs" of London "will give trouble, and very numerous and serious fires will tell hard upon the insurance offices." On the 11th of March, the moon seems "rather afflicted," and this points to "many troubles and mighty changes among the Ministry, which will go nigh to be cast out of power, chiefly through the intrigues of female foes." All this is enough to make nervous people quake in their shoes. Let us hope that the voices of the stars have for once deceived their prophet.



[A NARROW ESCAPE.]

HEART'S CONTENT. A Christmas Story.

By the Author of "Bondage of Brandon," &c., &c.

CHAPTER VII.

DARBY CHIVERTON was totally unable to overcome the trepidation he felt at the usurer's request that he should affix his signature to so dangerous a document as the confession which Jonas Bloxam had drawn up.

As he still sat, pale and trembling, without attempting to take up the pen, the usurer said: "The times are bad. The year has not been good. Farmers who owe me money have failed to pay, and I shall inconvenience myself by letting you have this money."

"You run very little risk," said Darby.

"If you are the real son of Lord Cariston, your father will pay this bill for you, and I will let you have your letter back again."

"I swear to you—"

"That is all very well; but I must protect myself," interrupted Mr. Bloxam. "When I have this letter and the bill I shall rest contented. If you are an impostor, and you don't pay me, I shall denounce you to the police, at the expiration of twelve months."

Darby's hair bristled.

He did not speak.

"Make haste," said Jonas Bloxam, playing with the notes. "Once more, I say, take it or leave it. We can finish the affair at once, if you like."

The perspiration rolled down Darby's face.

"You ask me to ruin myself," he said.

"Not at all. It is a guarantee for my money. That is what I have a right to exact. When you have paid me, I will, as I said, give you back your letter."

"Really?"

"I lend my money at the highest possible rate," answered Jonas Bloxam; "but I never break my word."

A cloud passed before the eyes of Darby, and in that cloud he saw the figure of Mona, tall, stately, unbending, regarding him threateningly.

"Give me the paper," he said.

Of two evils, he chose, as he thought, the least. He hastily wrote his signature to the bill, and signed the letter.

The latter document was to this effect:

"DEAR MR. BLOXAM,—

"In consideration of your lending me five thousand pounds, of which I am in need, I hereby

confess that I am not the son of Lord and Lady Cariston. My mother made a false statement on her deathbed. The plot was arranged between us; and I place myself at your mercy.

"Yours faithfully,

"DARBY LEIGH.

"[Once known as Chiverton.]"

Jonas Bloxam dried both papers before the fire, and folding them up, placed them in the secret drawer of his desk.

Darby took the money, and, counting it, put the notes in his pocket.

"Keep faith with me, my lad," said the usurer, "and we shall have no occasion to fall out; but if you trifle with me, I will send you to Portland Island, as sure as my name's Bloxam."

Darby trembled afresh, and shaking hands with his new friend, left the house, and walked rapidly down the drive.

In the road he ran up against a man who was standing still.

"Hullo!" exclaimed the man, "why don't you look where you are going to?"

It was Hamley Morris.

"Don't you know me?" said Darby.

"It is you, eh? These dark mornings it is difficult to see," replied Morris. "Where have you been? Mr. Bloxam's, is it not? A worthy money-lender, though he charges cent. per cent."

"I know one of the servants there," rejoined Darby.

"Indeed. You should drop those low acquaintances now you have achieved a position," said Hamley Morris, mercilessly.

"Good-bye," said Darby. "I am going to Heart's Content, to breakfast."

"So am I. We will walk together."

Hamley Morris took his arm, and they walked down the snow-covered road.

For some time they proceeded in silence.

"I don't know why you should fasten yourself upon me?" said Darby, at length. "I have never sought your acquaintance."

"Possibly not. I want to talk to you, though," answered Hamley Morris, quietly.

"To me?"

"Yes—why not?"

"You do not seem to understand the difference in our positions?" said Darby, with an affectation of haughtiness.

"You mean that I am an honest man, whose character is above suspicion, and you—"

"Once for all, sir. I shall not allow myself to be insulted by you!" cried Darby, angrily.

"Very well. Let us change the conversation. What have you done with that little box, you raked out from amidst the bushes on the lawn, and started with this morning?" asked Hamley Morris, unconcernedly.

"You are mistaken," said Darby, his teeth chattering.

"You feel the cold. Walk more quickly; and answer my questions presently. Have you heard that Lady Chiverton has lost her jewels in the fire?"

"That is not surprising."

"Why not?"

"Fire usually consumes everything that it comes in contact with," replied Darby, more at his ease.

"The fire never came in contact with those jewels, or it would have left some remains. By the way, what have you done with that little box, I spoke about just now?"

Darby wrested his arm away from Hamley Morris; and stopping in the road, asked:

"What are you trying to do with me?"

"Oh—nothing at all, my dear fellow. I only wish you to gratify my harmless curiosity."

The two men looked at one another; and Darby's eyes sought the ground.

Hamley Morris regarded him pityingly; and a smile played around the corners of his mouth.

With every appearance of sincerity Darby assured Hamley Morris that the box of which he spoke contained property of his own.

"Which you have deposited with Mr. Bloxam, I suppose," said Morris.

"Exactly."

"It is odd that you should have any property to dispose of, considering who and what you were so short a time back; and it is also odd that Lady Cariston's jewels should be missing," said Hamley Morris.

"Anyone, to hear us, would think you were a detective talking to a thief," said Darby, laughing, with an affectation of good humour.

"Perhaps we are respectively what you suggest, Mr. Chiverton," answered Morris, drily.

"Sir," answered Darby, drawing himself up, "you have persisted in making insulting remarks, ever since I had the misfortune to meet you this morning. You assail me in every way, and I will not stand it. I have done nothing, that I am aware of, to offend you or incur your hostility. In future I shall refuse to hold any sort of communication with you. If you continue to subject me to annoyance, I will see what a little personal chastisement will do for you."

Having delivered himself of this speech, which was a lengthy and elegant one for him, Darby strode

on in advance. Though tall and muscular, Hamley Morris was no match for Darby, who had been brought up in the woods, and was as hard as iron, as well as lithe and active.

Forgetting this, Morris advanced towards him, and, laying his hand on his arm, said:

"Not so fast, my friend, we have other things to talk about."

Darby's only reply to this speech was rapidly to retreat a step, and, extending his arm, strike his unfortunate acquaintance under the ear.

The effect of the blow was to send him staggering across the road, until he fell into the ditch, where he lay for some minutes in a confused, half-stunned, state.

"That will teach the fellow better manners," said Darby to himself, and, increasing his pace, he hurried on to Heart's Content.

When Hamley Morris "poked himself up," as he expressed it, he felt rather dizzy, and came to the conclusion that it was not advisable to rouse Darby's temper too much.

"Never mind," he muttered, "It will all go into the settlement of accounts, which must take place sooner or later. I can afford to wait; only it makes me more bitter against him. Whew! how hard he hits. His fist is like a sledge hammer."

Reaching Heart's Content about mid-day, Darby found its inmates in a great state of confusion.

Lord Cariston had been seized with a fit.

He was of an apoplectic nature and the excitement of the previous night had proved too much for him.

Two doctors were in the house, but their skill had not yet been sufficient to restore him to consciousness, and it was feared that he would die before the day closed.

This news made Darby's heart beat faster.

If Lord Cariston died the title would be his, and his power, together with his command of money, unlimited.

Mr. Ingledew and Marian did all they could to comfort Lady Cariston in her affliction, but were unsuccessful.

"If he would only recover his consciousness," she said, "if he would only recognise me and make some provision for the future. It is miserably selfish of me to talk like this, but it is excruciating to think that the wretched impostor, whom he has recognised as his son, will take everything."

"Let us hope for the best," said Mr. Ingledew.

"I cannot hope; my presentiments point the other way," she said, weeping.

Darby was particularly anxious.

He kept on asking for admission to the sick man's room, and when refused by the doctors, he waited outside and pestered them with innumerable questions.

Towards evening the patient grew worse.

He had not been conscious since his seizure, and it was feared that he would die without being able to take leave of his family.

A report was brought in respecting the fire at Hartshill Castle, which no one but Darby cared to read. He perused it, and found to his satisfaction that the damage was comparatively slight. The main portion of the building and one wing being quite habitable, while a few months would suffice to build up the part which had been consumed by the flames.

No one at Heart's Content thought of going to rest that night.

All awaited the appearance of the doctors, to tell them either that the end was approaching, or that the malady from which Lord Cariston suffered had taken a turn for the better.

Before morning all was over.

Lord Cariston, at a comparatively early age, breathed his last, without being conscious from the time of his seizure until the hour of his death.

The funeral of Ashley Leigh had been a very quiet and private one at Kensal Green, but that of Lord Cariston was an expensive and grand affair; his remains were deposited in the family vault, and Darby was made chief mourner.

Lady Cariston was much affected.

She continued to reside with Mr. Ingledew and Marian, at Heart's Content.

Darby, however, took up his abode at the castle, and lived there alone; he having intimated to Hamley Morris that he could dispense with his company, which compelled Morris to accept the hospitality of Mr. Ingledew, which was gladly extended to him, at the solicitation of Lady Cariston.

For society Darby depended upon a few of the officers quartered at Stanton, upon the vicar, the doctor, and Mr. Snarley, the lawyer.

He took the title of Lord Cariston, and possession of the property, which no one could prevent him doing, as there was nobody to contest his right, and the late lord had openly recognised and received him as his son.

Lady Cariston had a very small income of her own, which was hers before her marriage, but beyond this she had nothing.

Darby informed her that she might live at the castle if she chose, but she indignantly refused his offer.

It was reported that he drank very deeply, and gambled occasionally, with varying luck.

He was received politely whenever he called at Heart's Content, which he frequently did, for he was very fond of Marian.

This persistence in a hopeless passion enraged Mona, who, more than ever now, wished to be Darby's wife.

He had paid her the money he had borrowed from Jonas Bloxam, and she had not asked him for more. Occasionally, when he thought of the usurer and the terrible confession he had looked up in his desk, he trembled.

But he would drown all anticipation of the future in copious draughts of wine, and comfort himself with the reflection that he was Lord Cariston and master of Hartshill.

Among the late lord's papers, he found several bonds of Mr. Ingledew's; which proved that the antiquary had borrowed money from him at various times.

Darby knew that he was only a tenant of Heart's Content, and shrewdly suspected that he had not paid any rent for many years.

Mr. Snarley, the solicitor, of whom we have spoken, was a Stanton man, and not the attorney employed by Lady Cariston. He was a rival of his, and had purposely been engaged by Darby.

To him the new lord gave all the deeds, bonds, and papers, relating to Heart's Content, to look over.

One night, about six weeks after the funeral of Lord Cariston, there was the usual dinner party at the castle.

It consisted of Captain Scudamore, Snarley, Mr. Simms, Lieutenant Wood, and some others; who made a big hole in the wine-bins of the late lord; and rather patronised Darby.

At dinner, Captain Scudamore said:

"By the way, Cariston, I meant yesterday to ask you, if you were in any way pledged to Mr. Ingledew; as Heart's Content would make a splendid shooting box for a few months in the glen, and I should like to rent it of you."

"I scarcely know," answered Darby. "Snarley can tell us, I believe."

"He is simply and purely a tenant-at-will, my lord!" replied Snarley. "You could turn him out at a moment's notice."

"Really. Well, Scudamore, I will give you an answer in a day or two."

"Thanks," said the captain. "I have seen better places, and more game; but I should like to have you for a neighbour, you know."

This compliment pleased the new lord.

"When are we to have that day's shooting in the water-meadows, Cariston?" inquired Lieutenant Wood.

"When you like. I can lend you some of my fast-travelling setters; choice dogs they are, with capital noses."

"I prefer a couple I have of my own," was the answer. "Many thanks though for your offer. Mine are steady, old, three mile-an-hour dogs, which will stand a day and a night without making their point, and bring their game to hand."

This was the sort of conversation which went on for hours, unless some pretty girl in the neighbourhood was mentioned by name.

"Miss Ingledew is a fine girl!" observed Mr. Simms.

"I like the governess best!" remarked Snarley.

"She is too cold for my fancy," said Captain Scudamore. "What do you say, Cariston? You don't quite hit it off in that quarter, do you?"

"I am very friendly with the Ingledews; and I quite agree with you that Marian is perfection," replied Darby.

His friends, seeing which way the wind blew, as they phrased it, changed the subject.

On the day following, Darby rode over to Heart's Content; and finding Marian alone in the drawing-room, determined to take the opportunity of speaking to her seriously.

He thought that she would never be able to resist his title, his wealth, and position; and if she did, he resolved to threaten the father with ejectment, unless he coerced his daughter into a marriage repugnant alike to her feelings and her taste.

Ashley Leigh being dead, as Darby supposed, he considered this an additional reason why Marian should yield to his wishes.

She had lately recovered her serenity, and was singing when Darby entered, which made him believe that she had quite forgotten her first love.

"Oh, good morning," she exclaimed, when she saw

him, leaving off her song. "I will tell papa you are here."

"Please do nothing of the sort," he said. "It is with you I wish to talk."

"With me?"

Marian Ingledew elevated her eyebrows with surprise.

What could Darby have to say to her? She did not suspect for a moment that he had the audacity to love her, and tell her of his passion.

"I must chance offending you, Miss Ingledew—Marian, if I may call you so," he began.

"If you call me by my Christian name, sir," she said, purposely omitting on all occasions to give him his title, "you will be guilty of an unpardonable presumption."

"Forgive me, I had hoped it was otherwise; that I had made some impression upon your heart."

"My heart! Whatever can you mean?" Excuse me for laughing, but it is too ridiculous," she said, giving unrestrained way to her mirth.

Darby reddened to the roots of his hair.

"This is no laughing matter, Miss Ingledew," he said, gravely.

"You are right," she answered. "It is not. I thank you for recalling me to myself. I am about to leave you now, sir, and I shall repeat all that has passed between us to my father, and beg him to exert himself to protect me from similar annoyance for the future."

"So will I talk to your father," cried Darby, angrily, "and I think I can say that which will induce him to teach you to be more civil when I next speak to you."

"Indeed," said Marian, her lip curling with supreme contempt; "that is just the kind of speech I expected from you."

"You seem to forget who I am," he exclaimed.

"Oh, no. I never can forget that," she replied, with deep meaning.

Darby bit his nether lip till the blood came.

Marian walked from the room, with a queenly dignity she knew well how to assume.

"I'll bring her down on her knees," he muttered; "or out of this house they go, and the old man shall see the inside of the debtor's ward of the county jail."

He paced the room, impatiently, for some time, guessing that Marian would proceed at once to her father, who would, in his turn, seek him.

Nor was he mistaken.

Mr. Ingledew, a little excited, came into the drawing-room, and, in a nervous manner, peculiar to him, exclaimed:

"What am I to understand, Lord Cariston, from what my daughter has just related to me?"

"Only that she is a wayward child, sir, and I am her most devoted admirer," answered Darby.

"I am sorry for you, then, as she assures me she is indissolubly wedded to the past."

"The past?"

"That is to say she can never forget Mr. Ashley Leigh."

"In that case she has an odd way of showing her grief," answered Darby. "She always seems merry enough, and was singing when I came in."

"It is but for you to understand, once for all, I think, my lord, that you have no chance of gaining my daughter's love."

"No chance," repeated Darby slowly.

"None whatever."

"Very well," Darby continued, "now Mr. Ingledew, let us talk about a little matter of business which nearly concerns you."

"If you please," replied Mr. Ingledew, looking rather surprised.

"You are aware, I presume, that Heart's Content is my property?"

"Ah, yes; but I will pay you a rent for it, if that is what you want," said the old gentleman, still more nervously.

He was much attached to the old place and it would have cost him a pang to leave it.

"Have you forgotten that during the lifetime of the late Lord Cariston, you borrowed money from him?"

"I recollect it perfectly."

"And the amount?"

"Several thousands."

"For which you gave him bonds?"

"I did," said Mr. Ingledew. "But —"

"What?" asked Darby.

"Lord Cariston assured me that those bonds had been cancelled. He threw them into the fire, I think he said, and assured me I should never hear of them again."

"Possibly he intended to do so; but those bonds are in existence; are in my hands, Mr. Ingledew, and as a part of my patrimony, have become mine. Now, what I want to ask you is, where would you be if I were to press for payment of these bonds?"

Darby spoke in a loud tone of triumph. Mr. Ingledew was completely thunderstruck at this question. At length he answered, "God, in his mercy, only knows." He sank into a chair, and, sighing heavily, began to stir up the fire, in a restless and uneasy manner. Darby watched him with a sense of superiority, and enjoyed his victory. "I could not pay it," said Mr. Ingledew, in a hollow voice, "that is certain. I could not possibly pay you."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I don't want to be hard upon you," said Darby, in a patronising voice; "and if you would only use your influence with your daughter, all might be settled in a friendly way."

"In what way?" said Mr. Ingledew, looking up. "Why, just make us man and wife, and you could live here for ever."

"You do my daughter too much honour, my lord," the old man replied, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

"Oh! no, not at all," said Darby, mistaking his meaning, "I know she has not a penny, and your family is nothing; but she is a passable girl enough and I have taken a fancy to her; that is the long and short of it."

Mr. Ingledew's face became burning hot.

"I believe it is a good thing for Mary to marry commoners sometimes," continued Darby, puffed up with pride. "Of course I make a sacrifice, but she's worth it. I do think she's worth it."

"Now, my lord, allow me to speak," said Mr. Ingledew, with sudden energy.

"Certainly," said Darby, putting his hands in his pockets, and setting his back to the fire.

"Do you suppose that I would force my daughter's will, or sacrifice her happiness for an hour even, to render my position more bearable?"

"If you are not an idiot, I should think you would," Darby answered, coarsely.

"Do you dare to use such language to me, and in my own house," shouted the antiquary, white with passion.

"Your house?" sneered Darby. "That is questionable."

"At all events, it is mine till I leave it. Come what may, I will be master now, and I order you to quit it instantly."

"But, my dear sir, Marian—"

"I forbid you to mention her name. Out of my house, this instant," vociferated Mr. Ingledew.

"You shall repent this," exclaimed Darby, going towards the door.

Mr. Ingledew sank once more into his chair, inarticulate with rage.

Darby, seeing that his farther stay at present would be useless, quitted the apartment and mounted his horse.

"There is something very odd about these gentlemen, as they term themselves," he said to himself, as he rode along. "You never know how to speak to them for fear of offending them. It is impossible for a man, who has not been brought up amongst them, ever to hope to understand them."

Marian saw her suitor ride away, and anxiously sought her father, to hear in what manner he had got rid of him.

She found the old gentleman much perturbed, and inquired the cause of his grief.

"Ah, my dear," he said, "it was a bad day for all of us when this young fellow came into the title and estates. What do you think he threatened me with?"

"I cannot tell; though I can readily imagine anything to his prejudice," replied Marian.

"With expulsion from Heart's Content, unless—unless—"

He hesitated.

"Unless I consented to marry him. Was it not so?"

Mr. Ingledew nodded.

"Have him for a husband, indeed," continued Marian, with a toss of the head. "I would rather live and die an old maid. But can he, papa, do as he says?"

"I fear he can," answered Mr. Ingledew.

"How is that?"

"Being on such very friendly terms with the late Lord Cariston, I never asked him for a lease, my dear. It would have seemed that I distrusted him. I could not do it; nor did there appear any necessity for it, as we were sure of Ashley Leigh's protection. Consequently, I am merely what the lawyers call a tenant-at-will, and can be turned out at any moment."

"Cannot Lady Cariston do something?"

"Nothing at all."

"Well, we must go somewhere else; that is the long and the short of it," answered Marian. "I am sorry for you, papa dear, but you would not wish me to marry that man to save you a little inconvenience?"

"Certainly not. That is precisely what I told him."

"Oh, we can laugh at his threats."

"You have not heard the worst yet."

"Indeed!"

"I borrowed money from my old friend Cariston," Mr. Ingledew went on, "and the securities I gave for the advances are still in existence, and have fallen into the hands of this villain, who will seize and imprison me."

"He dare not be so base."

"In my opinion, he is capable of anything."

Lady Cariston and Mona, who had been out for a walk together, came in at this juncture, and were very indignant at the news which awaited them.

It mattered very little to Mona; but she felt really angry at Darby's having proposed to Marian, while she was pleased in proportion at his having been rejected.

"Let him do his worst; perhaps his career may not be so prosperous as he anticipates," said Lady Cariston.

"You forget, my lady," Mona ventured to say, "that you are speaking to your son."

"I have never acknowledged him as my son," was the stern and uncompromising answer, "I have steadily believed, and asserted him to be an impostor."

"The evidence was clear enough," said Mona.

"Not to me."

"At least to Lord Cariston and his advisers,"

Mona persisted.

"And that not irritate me, Miss Seafeld," said her ladyship, petulantly; "what interest have you in supporting his claim?"

"I oh, none whatever."

"Then please cease doing so, as your advocacy annoys me."

Mona walked out of the room, and went up one flight of stairs, as if she intended to change her things; but she altered her mind, and, quitting the house, walked across the fields to Hartshill Castle.

"Is it not strange that your governess should be such a partizan of this young Chiverton?" remarked Lady Cariston.

"I think she admires him," said Marian, with a smile.

"Or his position," answered her ladyship, drily.

For a long time, the position of affairs was talked over.

No satisfactory conclusion was arrived at. As we have stated, Lady Cariston was left very poorly provided for; owing to her husband's dying intestate, and in so sudden a manner, that he could make no sort of provision for her.

It followed, therefore, that she was unable to help Mr. Ingledew with pecuniary assistance.

"If the worst comes," she said, "I am resolved Marian shall not marry him; but, perhaps, before the crisis comes, the storm, which is gathering over the usurper's head, will burst."

"To what storm do you allude," asked Mr. Ingledew.

"I cannot say more at present, even to you, my dear old friend," answered Lady Cariston. "But trust me, there are foes at work which are antagonistic to this young man."

These words set Mr. Ingledew thinking; but, returning to his study, he soon forgot all his troubles in the examination of a curious fossil, which had been dug up by a labourer near the ruins of the abbey.

The winter, though not very severe lost the intensity with which it set in. February appeared mild and genial for that time of the year, and Mona had an agreeable walk through the fields to Hartshill Castle.

While crossing them she heard the sound of a gun, and, presently, Darby appeared, a little to the left of her; he had reached home, and gone out with his dogs after the partridges.

He saluted her gruffly, and was going on over the heavy ground.

Mona had remarked that he had avoided her for some time past, but she had no intention of allowing him to escape this time.

"He wants to kick down the ladder by which he rose," she said; adding aloud, "I have come over on purpose to see you, and I request that you will stay and talk to me."

"I don't wish to do so," he answered, "why should I? Haven't I paid you the money you asked for? What more do you want?"

"More money. Double, treble, the amount you have given me. Do you not know that people must be paid for keeping secrets, Darby Chiverton?"

The cold, hard voice in which she spoke rendered Darby uneasy.

"I shall go abroad, if I am to be worried in this way," he said, with the sulky air of a contradicted child.

"Possibly you will. But if you do, the government shall pay your passage. I will take care of that!" answered Mona.

"Don't talk like that. Let's have no foolishness," said Darby, growing still more uneasy. "If it's money you are in need of, I'll find it for you. I suppose you want to start in some business, eh? The fancy goods and Berlin wool line, eh?"

Mona smiled disdainfully at this suggestion.

What a very bad judge of character and human nature, especially female human nature, Darby was! "You have proposed to Miss Ingledew?" she said, not caring to answer him.

"I did, and—"

"She refused you. It is as well for you to learn that there is no chance in that quarter."

"I'll make her have me. I'll turn them out of house and home, and put the father in prison!" said Darby, threateningly.

"That will do you no good. You will be no nearer the object of your ambition than you were before. The girl hates you, and will not be dazzled by your rank and fortune. The effect will be simply this: Mr. Ingledew will go through the bankruptcy court; and Marian will live with Lady Cariston until affairs are settled."

"She'll submit, if she loves her father; and the old man's fond of the place. He's lived at Heart's Content so many years."

"That does not matter," replied Mona, in her decisive way. "Marian will never be yours; so you may as well dismiss the idea from your mind at once and for ever; and as you are so fond of threatening, listen to me."

"To you!"

"Yes. Why should I not threaten in my turn?" asked Mona, with a mocking laugh. "I am in a position to do so. Do you think that when I conceived the idea of placing you where you now are, that I should be satisfied with a few paltry thousands?"

"I run all the risk!" Darby said.

"Listen to me!" cried Mona, impatiently. "Don't suppose for a moment that I have any affection for you. But I, nevertheless, want you to make me Lady Cariston."

"What!" said Darby, completely astounded.

"Marry you!"

"That is the only way in which you can save yourself from destruction. I have made, and I can unmake."

"You know I love Marian!" he said, in confusion.

"Put love out of the question. It need not exist with you and I; settle a handsome sum upon me, and we will separate on the day of the marriage. All I want is the title, and money enough to support the position."

"But, once married, how can I ever hope to possess Marian?"

"You have no chance. Have I not told you so?"

"Why will you persist in chasing a phantom?"

"One word."

"The matter will not bear argument; it is a waste of time. Make me a friend if you will, and live in peace and prosperity. Make me an enemy, and see what will happen. I will shatter my work to pieces. You are a thing of my hands, just as much as if you were so much potter's clay."

While speaking, they had been standing near a hedge; and had been guilty of an imprudence in not moving farther afield.

Darby was trembling violently, when he heard a noise, apparently coming from the ditch.

Being physically strong, he leaped through a gap, Mona watching him anxiously.

There was almost immediately the sound of a scuffle.

Loud cries arose.

Presently Darby re-appeared, dragging after him the body of a man, which he kicked and cuffed unmercifully.

"I'll teach you to listen in ditches, you cowardly vagabond!" he said. "This isn't the first time you have played the spy on me, you miserable hound!"

With an effort, the man released himself from Darby's powerful grasp, and retreating a few paces, shook himself, and collected his confused senses.

With an inward tremor and a sinking of the heart, Mona recognised Hamley Morris.

She had always entertained a distrust of this man. How much of their conversation had he overheard?

This was the alarming question which presented itself both to her mind and that of Darby.

Hamley Morris did not seem much worse for the shaking and beating he had received. He arranged his coat, and bowing to Mona, said:

"Delightful place for conspirators to meet, Miss Seafeld."

"What do you mean, sir?" she answered, with some composure.

"I have to thank you," he said, "for placing me in possession of much valuable information, which, I have no doubt, I shall know how to turn to good account. Up to the present time, although I had suspected it, I was not aware that you and Mr. Chiverton were acting in concert, and that, you were, if I may so express myself, the motive power in the plot which has made him Lord Carleton. At present, I have the honour to wish you good morning. Your servant, my lord. You shall hear of me again shortly. I will not forget the attention you have shown me to-day."

This address threw them both into much alarm.

The mock politeness with which Hamley Morris spoke was more terrifying than open menaces.

As he walked away, Darby grasped his gun nervously.

"Not now," said Mona, laying her hand upon his arm.

"The meddling fool," answered Darby. "I had a mind to put a charge of shot in him."

"He knows too much. I think he must be in the pay of Lady Carleton, and is brought down here especially to serve her ends and unravel the mystery which she supposes exists."

"What shall we do?" asked Darby, in perplexity.

"We are not safe while that man lives. Can you find your father?" asked Mona.

"Yes, without difficulty. He has sent me a note, saying he wants to see me."

"Ah, he is anxious to have his reward. You must see him."

"To what end?"

"Give or promise him what money he wants," replied Mona. "But only on condition that he puts this man out of the way. A shot from behind a hedge will do it safely. When people play for the high stakes that we do, they must not hesitate at trifles."

"I will see the old man," Darby replied.

"You fully understand what I mean?"

"I do. Leave it to me."

"I will do so; and the other matter in negotiation between us will stand over for a few days. This is a pressing danger, and must be first attended to."

Darby again promised that he would see Daddy Chiverton without delay, and Mona, ill at ease, left him, to return to Heart's Content.

The appearance of Hamley Morris on the scene, in the character of an enemy, had somewhat disarranged her ambitious schemes, and she was sure that no security could be enjoyed while he continued to exist.

Darby shouldered his gun, and instead of going back to the castle, walked straight to the wood at the skirts of which Daddy Chiverton's cottage was situated.

About an hour's brisk walking brought him to it.

The old man had been getting impatient for his reward, or his share of the plunder, as Mona had surmised, and knowing that his son would obey his summons at his earliest convenience, he was waiting about for him.

The thin smoke curled up from the little chimney, and Darby, pushing the door open, walked in.

Daddy Chiverton was sitting before the fire, smoking a short clay pipe, black from constant use.

He did not rise as his son entered.

Pointing to a broken cane-bottomed chair, he motioned him to sit down.

"You have been a long time coming, or I shouldn't have written to you," he said.

"What do you want?" asked Darby, laconically.

"Money, my lad; not a heap down, but something certain every quarter."

"You can't spend it here."

"I don't intend to try," answered Daddy Chiverton.

"Now you're a lord, there is a great distance between us, and I couldn't mix with your friends, so I'm going to take myself off, right away."

"Where are you going to?"

"I don't know yet. London first, I think."

"You shall have what you ask for," replied Darby. "But there is something you must do for it; a man has been set on to watch me, by her ladyship, and he's found out a good deal; he must be put out of the way. You lay wait for him, and fire at him, some fine night. Nobody will suspect you, and in London you'll be safe enough."

"It's as bad as that is it?" queried the old man.

"Yes," replied Darby, gloomily.

"Who is the man?"

"His name is Hamley Morris, he lodges at farmer Painter's, the Low Wood Farm."

"I know it."

"There was a silence of some minutes duration."

"You must not be turned out now, Darby; that

would never do. I want to live an idle life in London, and have plenty to eat and drink and smoke, like a gentleman, and nothing to do for it. This Hamley Morris shan't stand in the way," said Daddy Chiverton.

"You'll do the job?"

"Trust me. I'll manage it. Leave him to me," said the father, with a malevolent glance. "All you have to do is to place a hundred pounds, every quarter, for me in the bank at Stanton, and I'll send for it from London; and give me something to start with."

Darby carelessly tossed him his purse.

"There is a lot in it. I don't know how much," he said.

"I daresay it will do. I can always write for more," answered Daddy.

"Is that all?" asked Darby.

"Yes. I don't know as I have anything more to say to you."

"Then I'll be going," said this dutiful son.

Shouldering his gun again, Darby nodded to his father and quitted the cottage.

Old Daddy remained plunged in thought for some time, thinking over the commission to murder, which had been given him.

Rising after a time, he said to himself, "I'll go and potter about the Low Wood Farm, to get a look at this Hamley Morris. It won't do to make a mistake in an affair of this sort."

(To be continued.)

SIR ALVICK.

CHAPTER LVI.

"WITHOUT that parchment," continued John Roffton, "I could do nothing to prove your birth, nor even with it could I be sure of being able to do anything without the assistance of my father. Thus was I powerless."

"It is very probable," said Hugh De Lisle, "that I became holder of the seal of Sir Alvick by accident, or perhaps the wife of Langville was mistaken in saying that it ever belonged to me. She had been told that one of the two lads confided to her care was the son of Sir Alvick—you did not hint to her whose son the other child was?"

"No, my lord, I did not," replied John Roffton, "farther than that one of the lads was my nephew."

"It was to her interest, as she had received aid from me, then," continued Hugh De Lisle, "to tell me a story apt to gain my good will. But now, my friends, as it is near daybreak, I must leave the cottage and hide in the Tangle, until John Roffton brings me word from Captain Frank Saybyrd. Beavry, I leave Miss Evaline to your care. Conceal her as long as you can from the pursuit of the baronet."

"No need, my lord, to tell me that," promptly replied the hearty old gamekeeper.

"And I will go to gain your lordship to the Tangle," said James Sturley. "The horse I rode is without, friend Beavry, I am sure that you will attend to him. I am impatient to be within the Tangle to seek for the leaden box which contains the parchment."

Both Hugh De Lisle and the eager old man hastily prepared to depart, old Beavry quickly filling a basket with provisions for them.

Day was just dawning as the two left the cottage and hurried into the dense forest of Ulster Park, directing their course towards the Tangle.

It was well for the outlawed officer that he made such haste, for but a few moments had elapsed, when Hark Varly and his party of mercenaries surrounded the cottage and demanded admittance.

Beavry delayed their entrance as long as he could, but finding forcible resistance in vain, he was compelled to admit them, much against his will.

A rigid search was made in every part of the cottage, and when Beavry discovered the absence of Harrison he at once saw to whom he was indebted for this intrusion.

Unable to find either Hugh De Lisle or Evaline—for dame Beavry had successfully hidden the young lady beyond discovery, the party returned to the Manor House.

Meanwhile Hugh De Lisle and James Sturley had pursued their way towards the Tangle, and arrived, just as the sun arose brightly from the clouds of the previous night, at the spot where Sir Malcolm Ulster and Lord Hayward had fought the fatal duel, twenty-three years before.

James Sturley gazed about for several minutes before he spoke, tears rolling down his withered cheeks as he did so.

"It was in this lonely spot, my lord," he said, "that your noble father died. It was here that his corpse was found, pierced with his own sword-blade and dagger."

Hugh De Lisle, deeply awed by the solemnity of the scene, and the remembrance of the deed he had heard described by Hark Varly, gravely replied:

"It was here that Lord Hayward was murdered."

"I cannot say that he was murdered, my lord, but it was here where I stand that we found his dead body."

"And I know that he was most foully murdered by Alvick Ulster," replied Hugh De Lisle, "and, if ever I am a pardoned man, and proved to be Lord Hayward's son, I will not rest until I shall have punished the cowardly murderer."

"Your lordship has heard more than I have concerning Lord Hayward's death," said James Sturley. "I feared he had been murdered, for I knew well the evil nature of Alvick Ulster, and the motives which might prompt him to commit the dreadful deed. But be silent a moment, my lord, that I may try to remember where your honoured father and I buried the leaden box."

Twenty-three years had greatly altered the spot; shrubs had grown into tall trees, and where many trees had been, only their decaying trunks remained. The old man seemed much bewildered for a long time, while Hugh De Lisle retired apart, that his near presence should not disturb Sturley's struggling memory.

"Heavens," thought the old man, in an agony of fear, "I trust I have not forgotten; yet the aspect of everything is terribly perplexing."

He made the circuit of the award, which was now greatly covered with undergrowth, and returned to the centre, where he studied closely his position.

Hugh De Lisle watched him anxiously, and despaired as he reflected how many years had passed since James Sturley had visited that spot, and that all those years had passed while Sturley was in prison, with an enfeebled mind.

"I must believe the old man's story," he mused, "yet of what use is my belief, if he cannot prove it by the written evidence and witnessed documentary declaration of the unfortunate marquis. At least, the horror of the belief that I am the son of Sir Alvick Ulster no longer weighs upon my mind."

An hour of painful, tedious waiting passed, and another had begun, when James Sturley exclaimed:

"I remember! I remember! Thank heaven, my lord, all is clear now!"

Then facing a very aged tree, whose branches had all decayed, yet retained the general outline of their appearance twenty-three years before, he paced seven steps due east, then seven steps due north, where he halted, and said:

"We will dig here, my lord, and see if my memory has played me false."

The undergrowth had first to be cleared away, and that being done, they began to probe the soft earth with Hugh De Lisle's sword, the sword he had snatched from Lord Peter as he escaped from Ulster keep.

"It will be strange," thought Hugh De Lisle, as he thrust the blade deep into the earth, here and there, clear to the hilt-guards, "if the sword of the son of the man who slew my father should discover the evidence which shall make Lord Peter a spurious heir, and win for Lord Hayward's son the usurped marquise."

Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Something is struck by my sword-point here. It may be wood, stone, or the leaden box."

"That we shall soon see," replied James Sturley, as both knelt upon the ground and began to remove the soil, James Sturley using the dagger of Hugh De Lisle, and the latter his sword-blade.

Much conversation over past events passed between the two as they toiled at their work, so that each became informed of many things he had not heard before.

The sun was quite high in the heavens, when the old man cried out:

"It is the box. I saw the glint of the lead as the dagger scarred it. Thank heaven, it is here!"

A few more minutes of labour enabled Hugh De Lisle to extricate from the earth, in which it had been so long imbedded, a small leaden box, about six inches square and deep.

It was firmly soldered, but the dagger soon cut through and around its edges, so that what appeared to be a solid mass of wax was revealed. Cutting into this carefully, he took from it a package covered with oiled silk, and after taking this envelope off, a large and closely-folded sheet of parchment was found.

Hugh De Lisle eagerly unfolded this parchment, James Sturley saying:

"Lord Hayward wrote that, my lord. My son says the marquis first drew up a draft of what he desired to have attested and preserved. The draft was destroyed—"

"No, it was not, though Lord Hayward thought so, no doubt," interrupted Hugh De Lisle. "The

existence of that draft led Jarles and his accomplices to plot to gain the marquise for Hark Varly. But let me read this parchment, which seems very much like that which I heard quoted by Hark Varly."

We need not record, verbatim, the contents of the parchment, the main facts being already known to the reader, but they were a full confirmation of Hugh De Lisle's claims to the marquise, the following statement being made, in substance:

That the death of Edward Charles Fitz-Osborn did not occur at the time stated, March 15th, 1687; that the marquise made the false record on the 18th of April, 1687—the parchment bearing date 25th April, 1687, and the signature of the marquise then being witnessed and attested on the same day by Sir John Harley, Sir Charles Bashbanks, Sir William Moore, and Sir Victor Landeers; that the marquise had indelibly imprinted upon the left hand and breast of Edward Charles a broad blue cross, in the town of Llewellyn, Wales, in the presence of Maud Glenning, James and Simon Sturley, Sir Walter Ap-Fryth, and Sir Owen Ap-Oscayt; in whose presence the marquise solemnly avowed the infant so marked to be his only child and heir, to be known by the name of Hugh De Lisle until the marquise should see fit to restore to him his baptismal name, or circumstances should permit the revelation of the parchment on which all this was written; and likewise the cause which had led the marquise to use these precautions to guard the life and rights of the infant Edward Charles *alias* Hugh De Lisle—the evil conduct of lady Matilda being indignantly asserted by the marquise, and the ring with the inscription being pointedly mentioned.

The parchment farther stated that it was the intention of the marquise to go abroad, to escape the scandal which he feared would arise, and all these statements were in the handwriting of the marquise; who also stated that he had reason to believe that Alrick Ulster, to whom he attributed all his troubles, was legally married to Aspa Jarles, under the name of Harlow Clayton, though this was beyond his power to prove.

After a careful perusal of this parchment, Hugh De Lisle said gravely and with deep emotion:

"I must believe, James Sturley, that I am the son of Lord Hayward. I can no longer doubt it."

"Nor can anyone, my dear lord," replied the triumphant old man, "when that parchment with all the corroborative evidence we are able to produce is before the world. Marquis of Galmount, old James Sturley has not lived in vain, since he has lived long enough to protect the solemn and sacred purpose of the master he loved so well."

The old man, no longer able to control his feelings, threw himself into the arms of Lord Hugh De Lisle, Marquis of Galmount, who heartily and tearfully embraced him, saying:

"Kind and faithful old man, you shall be henceforth as a father to me, and call me your son."

"Oh no, my lord, I ask no such high reward," replied the faithful old huntsman. "Let me but live to see you the established lord and marquis of Galmount, the acknowledged son and heir of my beloved Lord Hayward, and I ask no more happy fortune."

"You shall ask no better, for no one shall be more honoured by Hugh De Lisle than James Sturley and his faithful son Simon. But the sentence of death still hangs over me, and my enemies, if they capture me, will not hesitate, having the law with them, to slay me on the spot."

"Let us hope that your lordship may evade their pursuit until your friends in London shall have gained your pardon," said James Sturley. "Surely, heaven, which has protected you to this hour and guided you to this great discovery has not an untimely death for you. The friend you have mentioned, Captain Frank Saybyrd, may have already seen the good-natured queen and obtained your pardon."

"My firmest hopes of speedy pardon are in him—"

"Next to heaven, my lord," interrupted the old man respectfully and reverentially, respectfully to his young lord, and reverentially to heaven.

"You are right, good old friend," remarked Hugh De Lisle, bowing kindly. "Next to heaven, my hopes are centred in the exertions of Captain Saybyrd, who, though but a very recent acquaintance, I firmly believe to be a most honourable man and truly friendly to me."

"Your lordship saved his life, you told me," replied James Sturley, "and if he be an honourable man, he will not work slowly nor feebly in your behalf. Your enemies will scarcely seek for you so near them."

Several hours had passed since they had entered the Tangle, and it was noon when they were startled by the approach of John Roffton and Captain Saybyrd, who did not perceive them until they left their

covert in the undergrowth and advanced towards them eagerly.

"You are a free man, Captain De Lisle," exclaimed John Roffton, running to meet them. "Captain Saybyrd has your lordship's pardon with him."

"Thank heaven for that!" replied Hugh De Lisle, raising his eyes upwards; and then extending his hand to Saybyrd, he added, "and thank, you, too dear friend."

Captain Saybyrd greeted him cordially, as he gave him a roll of parchment to which was appended the broad seal of the Queen of England, saying:

"I had a fearful ride of it last night, Captain De Lisle, and as I rode back this morning I wondered how I had escaped being lost on my way to Ulsterborough. Fortunately I found the queen had arrived, and early this morning I gained access to her majesty; for we naval officers are in great favour just now. I had no difficulty in obtaining her majesty's signature and seal to a full pardon and reversal of the sentence, so I must now style you Sir Hugh De Lisle, your title also being restored to you by the queen, who hopes she may soon greet you in person."

"He is higher than a mere knight," said old Sturley, proudly, "as all the world shall know. He is no less than Marquis of Galmount."

"So this kind man told me as we hurried hither," replied Captain Saybyrd. "He was watching for my return to the Manor, and accosted me at once; so I did not pause even to speak with my friend, Lord Morton, but hurried away with this soldier. But he has told me there is a great stir at the Manor, as a certain Hassan Wharlie has declared himself to be the legitimate son and heir of the baronetcy of Ulster, and a certain Major or Colonel Hark Varly also declared himself to be the legitimate son of Lord Hayward, late Marquis of Galmount."

"Ah, indeed," said Hugh De Lisle, "and how does Sir Alrick behave, and Lady Matilda?"

"As for that," replied John Roffton, "the baronet seems crushed and amazed, completely under the control of Hassan Wharlie and Amos Jarles, who swagger about in great style; Lady Matilda is very pale and severe in face, and says nothing. As for Lord Peter, he has mounted his horse and ridden over to Osborn Castle, defying Wharlie, Jarles, and the whole world to prove that he is not the only son and only child of Lord Hayward."

"When I left Ulsterborough," said Captain Saybyrd, "the queen and her retinue were making preparations to visit Ulster Manor, as her majesty has a very high opinion of the baronet. It is very probable that by the time we return we shall find the queen there."

"I suppose eager search is being made for me, corporal?" asked Hugh De Lisle.

"Your lordship had a very narrow escape this morning, as I will relate as we return to the Manor. It is thought that you have hastened to leave this country with Miss Evaline, who still remains at Beavy's cottage. But we must be cautious in our approach to the Manor, or some of the mercenaries of Wharlie or Varly may attempt to compass the death of your lordship."

"I will walk arm-and-arm with Sir Hugh De Lisle—pardon me, sir, if I do not call you, my lord," said Captain Saybyrd.

"Time enough for that when I shall have been proved to be a lord," replied Hugh De Lisle, with a smile. "I am very sure I look very little like anything except a beggar at present," he added, as he glanced at his soiled and disordered attire.

"I have a change or two of dress in my luggage at the Manor," remarked Captain Saybyrd, understanding the remark, "and as we are about the same size and figure, I place them at your service, Sir Hugh. No thanks for that, sir. You and I will approach the Manor arm-in-arm, and I am very sure no one will dare to shoot at you at the risk of hitting me. Besides, all will think you are my prisoner."

The distance from the Tangle to the entrance of the broad avenue which led up to Ulster Manor, as the residence of the baronet was termed, was fully two miles, so that the party had ample time for interchange of conversation as they walked.

We need not relate that conversation, as we must hasten to relate what had transpired at the mansion, after the return of Hark Varly and his baffled party from the cottage of the gamekeeper; merely stating that as Hugh De Lisle and his friends entered the avenue, Captain Saybyrd exclaimed:

"It is as I thought. The queen and her retinue have arrived, for there are the royal coaches, and a guard of her majesty's household troops near them."

CHAPTER LVII.

WHEN Hark Varly returned from the unsuccessful expedition and reported the result to Mr. Wharlie, that estimable gentleman coiled and uncoiled, and

leaped about with rage and the vexation of disappointment.

The sun had risen and yet he heard nothing from his powerful accomplice, Ross Chaffton, for whose mysterious absence he could not account.

Both he and Hark Varly, as well as old Jarles, concluded that Hugh De Lisle had made all speed to place as great a distance as possible between himself and Ulster Manor, and that he was accompanied by Evaline.

"I may as well resign all hopes of being the husband of that young lady," said Mr. Wharlie, with a very ugly grimace, though, indeed, all his grimaces were hideously ugly. "But, perhaps, her fortune is within the control of Sir Alrick, and if so I'll finger it. Of course, Major Varly, you will spread the news in official quarters that the rascal is at large."

"The news will spread itself; but as Hugh De Lisle's life is in instant peril, I have no doubt he will try to escape to France, where he will wait to hear from his friends in England," replied Varly.

"It shall be my especial business," observed old Jarles, who was eagerly awaiting some signs of breakfast, "to see that he obtains no pardon; and as Hark Varly has powerful friends near the queen, we can readily manage that. But I have been thinking that we may as well force the baronet to a public acknowledgment of your claims, laddie Hassie, now that Hugh De Lisle is off, eh?"

"My opinion; and that over, we may as well let Lady Aspa, who pretends to be asleep, return to Morton Hall."

"I am not asleep, Hassan Wharlie," said the lady, scornfully. "I pray you make all haste to give me liberty, for I am heartily tired of your company."

"No doubt, my lady, but not to oblige you do I make haste," retorted Wharlie, venomously. "Come, Major, we will go seek the baronet, and inform him that he must declare before his household and all now upon his premises, that I am his legitimate son and heir. There is no need for delay."

"It may as well be made known, too, and at the same time by the baronet, that I intend to press my claims for the marquise," said Hark Varly. "As well now as at another time."

"I don't think so," remarked Mr. Wharlie, an opinion in which old Jarles coincided with alacrity.

"And why not, Mr. Jarles?"

"Because we came down on them too much at once, you see. It will look suspicious, you know. Let laddie Hassie be acknowledged and recognised as the baronet's son and heir first. Let a few weeks or even a few months pass after that, and when we are quite sure of one thing, make a charge to gain the other. Of course we have made a grand combined attack upon the baronet and Lady Matilda, and we have vanquished them completely. They are in our power—they are ours, eh? Well, now it is before us to face the world, and it is folly to try to take the world by storm. We must do that by degrees, eh? Let laddie Hassie get warm and comfortable in his established rights," added old Jarles, rubbing his hands briskly, "and then we shall all be both able and willing to make Hark Varly a marquise. It is too big a dose for the public to swallow at once without a great deal of kicking."

"Such may be your opinion; it is not mine," replied Major Varly. "It would not be the opinion of Ross Chaffton, were he present. No, we move altogether; for after you have made your dear laddie Hassie heir to the baronetcy, you will care very little about Hark Varly. I do not trust either of you. I know your slippery ways too well ever to trust you. Therefore I insist that you shall force Sir Alrick to declare that he has good reason to believe Major Hark Varly to be the supposed deceased Edward Charles. I do not demand that you shall attempt to prove it at this time, for I desire that my claims should be made in a legal shape. But I desire the report shall spread abroad that the child Edward Charles did not die as has been universally believed."

He was so firm in this, and Ross Chaffton not being there to decide against him, that Wharlie and Jarles were obliged to yield.

This being agreed upon, Mr. Wharlie and Hark Varly left the room, and sought Sir Alrick, whom they found in the library with Lady Matilda.

Both looked worn and wan, as indeed they were, for the more they had studied and argued upon their position the more hopeless did it appear. Without sleep or rest all the past night, and with their minds racked with intense excitement, their hearts sank as Wharlie and Varly imperiously stated their demands.

In vain the baronet asked for delay. Mr. Wharlie threatened to proceed at once to publish the acknowledgement he had won, and a full statement of all that Aspa Jarles had revealed; while at the same time he would appeal to the law, have Sir Alrick arrested upon the charge of bigamy and murder, and assail the reputation of Lady Matilda.

He used no choice expressions in declaring this, and knowing that the fellow would put his threats into effect, the baronet was forced to yield, after hours of argument and supplication, for the haughty criminal was so terrified and unnerved, that he stooped to actual supplication.

Lady Matilda said not a word. She was ill, faint, and desperate, and was mute and pale as marble.

The baronet ordered his household to be called together in the hall, and there he told the gaping hearers, while his lips were white and trembling, that the man who stood by his side, and who had been hitherto known by the name of Haasan Wharrie, was his legitimate son and heir, from his marriage with Aspa-Jarjes; and that he had many reasons to believe that the other gentleman near him, hitherto called Major Hark Varly, was Edward Charles Fitz-Osborn, whom all supposed had died twenty-three years before.

At which last statement, Lord Peter, who was present, called out:

"It is false, and I am ready to say so to any man in England," and forthwith he ordered his horse to be saddled, and then rode away, saying that he was going to Osborn Castle to prepare to put down this atrocious falsehood.

Lady Matilda had shut herself up in her most private room, full of rage and bitterness, and weaving far-reaching plans for vengeance upon Mr. Wharrie, while Sir Alfvick said these things.

When he had done he gnashed his teeth and cast a terrible glance of hate upon Mr. Wharrie, who laughed and bade the servants look upon him thereafter as their young master, and promised to be a very kind and generous young master withal.

Then he and Varly returned to old Jarjes, who in his turn went forth, hungry and terribly enraged because they had forgotten to send him his breakfast.

Meanwhile, Lord Morton, well-advised of all that was going on, for he heard the forced declaration of Sir Alfvick, leaning over the balustrade of the hall above, patiently bided his time and kept a sharp eye over his prisoner in the closet.

(To be continued.)

MICHEL-DEVER.

CHAPTER LXXV.

On the following morning Claire appeared at breakfast, looking paler than usual, but she was not less animated and agreeable in conversation; and Miss Digby thought that she detected a more brilliant light in her eyes, a softer tone in her voice, proving that the softer chords in her nature had been struck, and also argued favourably from these signs. She felt less dread as to the result of the approaching meeting, for she began to take the same view of the situation as Mr. Balfour did.

After the morning meal was over, when they were standing together within the portico, Alice, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, came up the pathway leading to the portico in which her father and Miss Digby stood. She spoke as soon as she came near enough to be heard:

"Here is something important from Lou, papa. She has written me only a line or two, but they tell the whole story. Here is what she says."

Alice displayed a sheet of note-paper on which were these words:

"I am so unhappy that I can hold out no longer; and, if papa will forgive me, I shall come back with Madame S—— and try to be a good daughter.—Louise."

"This is more than I hoped for," said Miss Digby, with a smile radiant with tender joy. Mr. Balfour hastily broke the seal of the dainty envelope Alice thrust into his hands, and read the lines traced on the sheets of note-paper within.

"RETREAT, July 29th, 18—.

"My Dearest Papa,—Can you forgive your naughty and selfish little girl for maintaining this long silence towards you? I have wanted to write to you every day, but my heart rose up in rebellious bitterness against you whenever I thought of you in the character of a sultor to any one. I did not reflect that it is not my place to sit in judgment upon you; and I have done it so ruthlessly, so undutifully, that now I have repented of it, I hardly know how I am atone to you for the harsh thoughts I have harboured towards the two best friends I have in the world.

"I do not wish you to think that putting me away from you, and giving strangers authority over me, has made me submissive; that only made me harder and more defiant than before; and only yesterday I felt as if nothing on earth should ever induce me to

forgive you for putting another wife in poor mamma's place.

"I am going to tell you what happened last night, and you will see why I write you this letter and understand the cause of the change in my feelings.

"I had been out walking with Madame S—— till quite dark, and I felt weary and depressed when I went to my room. The young girl who occupied it with me had been sent for by some of her friends, and I have it to myself. I did not say my prayers before I got into bed, for I felt that heaven had little care for such a poor, forlorn little outcast as I had made myself: yet I would not own that I was most to blame for being here with no one to love or caress me as in those pleasant days when, I acknowledge, I was happy at Seaview.

"I fell asleep almost as soon as my head touched the pillow; and then a vision came to me which I shall always remember. Soft music seemed to float through my chamber, and a radiant glow of light was gradually diffused around the bed on which I lay; floating in this was a form which I knew at once to be that of my mother, but so spiritualised, so beautified, that only the heart of one who had loved her as I did could have recognised her.

"But heavenly as she looked, there was a cloud of sorrow on her face; and, as she bent over me, a tear fell upon my brow. I raised my arms, and cried out:

"Oh, mamma, mamma! do angels weep over the unhappiness of those they have left on earth? Have you come to console me for being left alone with no one to care for me?"

"A soft murmur seemed to issue from her lips, which formed itself into words.

"I have come to show you your duty, Louise. Since kind earthly friends have set it before you in vain, I have obtained permission to visit you while you slumber, and show you how badly you have acted—how much unhappiness you are giving to those who deserve something better at your hands."

"I again cried out:

"It is for you I opposed them. Look into my heart, and see I thought only of you; while I believed papa had forgotten you."

"I know all that. I can read your thoughts, my child, and I have come to point out to you the right course to ensure your own happiness. Return to your home—witness what is to take place there: I have passed beyond that phase of earthly feeling. But I have deep concern for my children; and with her who will be your earthly mother you will be contented and beloved. Go back to her and heal the wounds your ingratitude has inflicted. Only by doing so can you win forgiveness in heaven and a blessing on the life that lies before you."

"I sobbed:

"I will obey you, mamma. I will try to do right, if you will kiss me once more."

"She seemed to float down nearer and nearer, and I hoped she was about to gather me to her heart and bear me away to the spirit-land; but she only touched my lips with hers, and then faintly whispered: 'Pray for strength, my darling,' and the phantasm dissolved, and I lay wide awake, staring through the darkness, but with my lips thrilling still with the kiss that had been impressed upon them.

"I was not frightened; though for a little while I firmly believed that mamma had been actually near me. I now know that she came to me only in a dream, but it was one that was too vivid to be passed over as others are. I got up, knelt down by the bed, and prayed earnestly to be helped to do right. I did not go to sleep for a long time afterwards. I lay awake, reviewing all my wayward conduct, and repenting of it. A new feeling came into my heart, which made me humbly ask:

"What right have I to claim to be first with those I love—I, who have so little to merit affection?"

"I remembered the wrangling of the Disciples as to who should be first in heaven, and I took to myself the rebuke of the Divine Master. For the first time I felt how deeply I have sinned against His precepts—how unworthy I am of His care, and of the affection shown for me by those to whom he has delegated the charge of my life.

"I no longer feel aggrieved that I am not of paramount importance to you; though I begin dimly to comprehend that my own self-assertion was the true source of my anger on mamma's account. I know she was happy in heaven, yet I insisted that you should make yourself a martyr of constancy to her memory.

"Forgive me, papa, and love me as in other days—I know that Aunt Ada will, for she has held open a door of reconciliation from the first, which I might have entered long ago if I had not been the most perverse of mortals.

"I am coming to Seaview with Madame S——, and I cannot tell you how delighted she was with the change in my feelings. She has been kind to

me, but very exacting, as you required; but you must not think it was the hard tasks that brought me to submission. I should have gone on learning them with a bitter aching in my heart, if mamma had not come to me and pointed out a better way. 'Your repentant and affectionate,' LOUISE."

Tears were standing in Mr. Balfour's eyes when he stopped reading, and he silently offered the letter to Miss Digby. At a sign from her, Alice approached and looked over her shoulder, and together they read the lines Louise had written.

There was silence among them for a few moments, and then Alice said, with a slight tremor in her voice which she ineffectually tried to combat:

"Lou was always famous for her dreams, you know, papa, but this is the most significant one she has ever had. I am most happy that something has brought her to a sense of her duty to you and Aunt Ada."

The father kissed her, and humbly said:

"I am going to the dear child myself to assure her how lovingly she is forgiven—how gladly we will welcome her to our hearts again. I shall be back by Thursday afternoon, bringing Louise and Madame S—— with me."

Miss Digby smilingly said:

"You can go now without compromising your dignity or authority, and I warmly second the proposed journey. Say everything that is kind and affectionate for me, and assure our young absentee that no reference will be made to what happened before she went away."

"Tell her too, papa, that I have been completely lost without her, and I cannot express how glad I am that she is coming back," said Alice. "I would not say that to her in my letters, because I thought she would not believe me—but she will now, and be glad to know it too."

There was yet time to reach the station before the twelve train passed, and Mr. Balfour hastened to prepare for his brief journey. In parting he said to Miss Digby:

"The only cloud on our future has vanished, Ada, and I am most grateful on your account that Louise promises to give you no more annoyance. She will be a charge to you, but I believe she will hereafter try to do right."

"I can trust her, and love her well enough to do for her all that can develop her native goodness and truth," she replied, with a smile, and he went away thinking himself among the most fortunate of men—as he certainly was.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

By Wednesday afternoon, all the preparations for the modest bridal were completed, and Miss Digby had retired to her own room to rest after the fatigue of the day, for she had superintended everything herself.

A letter was brought in to her which she read with some surprise and more interest. It was from Walter Thorne, and ran as follows:

"BRACK HOUSE, July 31, 18—.

"My dear Ada.—You will think this a very familiar address after what has passed within the last four years, but I have buried the dagger, and I hope that you are equally ready to forgive and forget."

"I acknowledge that I treated you discourteously; but in those days I had much to aggravate me and make my temper more difficult to manage than it naturally is; though heaven knows—and so do you—that it is bad enough at the best. I don't try to make myself out better than I am, but I am not quite so bad as some people think me."

"I hope that a better day is dawning for me; that sweeter influences may come into my life than any I have lately known. I have long wished to see you and speak with you on a subject of vital interest to me, but I did not know how to reopen the intercourse so abruptly closed by myself, with any prospect of having my advances tolerated. The invitation to your approaching marriage which was kindly given me by Mr. Balfour afforded the opportunity I so earnestly desired, and I accepted it at once."

"I have established myself at the village hotel for a few days, as I did not wish to impose myself upon you as a guest during my stay. I shall attend your wedding, and as your nearest kinsman, give you away, if you will permit me to do so. I shall do this with great pleasure, feeling that in some measure the wrong committed so long ago, against yourself and Mr. Balfour is at length righted, and those brought together, who should never have been severed by a ruthless and unscrupulous act on the part of my father."

"I write this to ask you to assist me to right another wrong which was committed at his command. I am most anxious to ascertain from you if you have maintained a correspondence with that unhappy girl

who was placed under your care by myself so many years ago? If you can afford me a clue to her present place of residence, I shall be glad, for I have long wished to meet her again, and if I find it possible to re-light the flame she once inspired, we may follow the example of yourself and Mr. Balfour.

"Will you receive me for half-an-hour this evening? I shall esteem it a great favour if you will, and I promise not to trespass beyond the time named."

"Respectfully, W. THORNE."

In her eagerness to show this request to Claire, Miss Digby forgot her weariness. She hastily despatched a line to Thorne, requesting him to come to the cottage at eight o'clock, and then went to her friend.

She found Claire quietly reading a new novel, and with a radiant smile, her friend said:

"Put aside your book, my dear. I have something that is far more exciting for your perusal."

Claire languidly extended her hand, but when her eyes fell upon the writing so long unfamiliar to them she started up flushing crimson. Miss Digby sat down and watched her as she read the lines relating to herself. Her lip curled half disdainfully, and her brows contracted. When she had finished, she calmly refolded the letter and gave it back to her friend. Finding that she did not speak, Miss Digby impatiently said:

"Well, Claire, what do you think of this opening to a reconciliation with Walter, and a re-union on a safer basis than the one you propose?"

"I think it very characteristic of Mr. Thorne to make his tardy justice conditional on the impression made upon himself by the object of his compassion. He retains some sentimental reminiscences of that period of his life, and if he finds his deserted wife as attractive as he wishes her to be, he may deign to throw her the handkerchief. I am not to be accepted on such terms, Ada, and I shall adhere to my own plans. When he comes, you may tell him of my life in Paris—of the lovers that surrounded me; of the gay and brilliant rôle I played; and leave him to infer that the heart of such a butterfly of fashion has no place left in it for him. I will cast my spells over him here, and if I find that he still adheres to his intention of seeking me in France, I promise you to tell him the truth and forego the retaliation I have planned. But you must give him no hint—you must leave me to play out my own comedy to the end."

"Is this your irrevocable determination, Claire?"

"It is—I wish to test the sincerity of his desire for atonement. If he be led away from it by the attraction of one he believes to be a stranger, I shall know how much it is worth."

"But if you marry him, that knowledge will not increase your chances of happiness."

"I do not expect such an impossibility—I ask only for justice at Mr. Thorne's hands, and I must attain it in my own way. I am glad he is coming hither this evening. I will walk on the beach with Alice, and return in time to be presented to him before he leaves. Manage so that our first interview shall take place in the portico, where the moonlight will not betray any change in my expression. For seventeen years I have worn the chain with which he fettered me, and now he shall feel some of its weight himself."

Miss Digby sighed, and arose from her seat. She said:

"I will aid you to regain your position as Walter's wife, since I see that your heart is set upon it; but I do it with the conviction that you will both yet find peace and content with each other. If I did not think so I should have many qualms of conscience for consenting to countenance the deception you are so eager to carry out."

The door closed on her, as she ceased speaking, and Claire started up, all her inertness gone, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling with triumph. She paced the floor rapidly for many moments in silence, but she paused at length beside a window, and muttered:

"He comes to be vanquished, and I shall be the victor. Yet if he would not succumb—if he would only remain true to his present intention, I could forgive him—could take him back with the same love I once felt. But if he yields to my fascinations, believing me to be other than I am, I will crush my own heart sooner than respond to his passion after the little month of bliss I have awarded him has passed away. I will pay him back in his own coin, and base as it is, it will be good enough for him."

She threw herself upon a sofa, and buried her face in the pillows, trying to compose the tumultuous throbbing of her heart, and regain perfect self-control before the hour for meeting Thorne arrived.

Claire was so far successful that when she appeared at supper, her friend could perceive no traces of the struggle through which she had passed, except that she was a little paler than usual. Miss Digby noticed that she had made an exquisite toilette, and looked unusually lovely, even for her.

It was past seven when they arose from the table, and Claire said to Alice:

"Let us walk on the beach, my dear, while Ada receives an old friend who is coming to call on her. We can return in time to be presented to him."

Alice gladly assented, and the two presently issued from the gate, the young girl wearing a wide-brimmed hat, and her companion draped in a black lace mantle, which was thrown over her head in the Spanish fashion.

As they moved towards the beach a gentleman was seen approaching the house they had left; he was moving forward very leisurely, occasionally kicking the pebbles upon his path, and seemed to be in no particular hurry to keep his appointment.

"Why should he be anxious to learn the whereabouts of a woman to whom he had been worse than indifferent for so many years," was the bitter thought of Claire, for she knew this must be Walter Thorne. "He only wishes to make his peace with Ada by pretending to feel a desire to do what is right, now that he has the power to act for himself. Well, we shall soon see what will come of it all."

They passed within a few yards of each other, and Thorne lifted his hat to them. In that brief glance, Claire saw how little he had changed. In his maturity he was even handsomer, she thought, than in his early youth, and for a moment, the old glamour returned, and she could have sprang towards him as of old, and buried her head upon the breast which had once so tenderly sheltered it. But the impulse passed as quickly as it arose; the gulf again opened between them; and slightly bowing, she folded her veil over her face, and walked rapidly onward.

Thorne paused a moment and looked after them.

"What a graceful woman," he thought; "she steps like a goddess—and the girl is pretty too—old Balfour's daughter, I suppose; but the other must be some new friend of Ada's. I hope she is handsome and agreeable, or this wedding will be a bore to me. I would never have come to it at all but for my desire to find out what she can tell me about Claire. Pshaw! why do I cling to that memory? she may have found some one to console her long ago."

He resumed his walk, humming a favourite air, presently entered the yard, and sauntered towards the house. Miss Digby came out to receive him, and they shook hands with each other as quietly as if they had met the week before. She said:

"It is pleasant in the portico this warm evening, and I have had chairs brought out. Shall we sit here, or do you prefer going in?"

"Let us remain here, by all means. There is a pretty view of the sea, and the moon will be rising over it presently."

After he was seated, he continued:

"I am much obliged to you, Ada, for according me your forgiveness. I behaved like a brute the last time we met, but I thought I had cause to complain of you, and my temper got the upper hand of me, as you know it is apt to do. Since those days I have been sorry for many things I did, and I would have made the amends long ago if I had known how to set about it. You may imagine how glad I was to accept the olive branch held out by Mr. Balfour, though he was not aware of the service he was doing me."

"I have forgiven you long ago, Walter, and I would have served you if you had allowed me to do so. I wished to take May under my care, but you would not consent. If you desired a reconciliation with me, why did you not avail yourself of the offer I made you when I heard of the death of Agnes, to receive her here?"

Thorne frowned, and bit his lip at this straightforward question. He coldly said:

"I had some such thought at first, but May offended me by setting herself in opposition to my wishes with reference to an affair that was important to me. I spoke in anger to her, and told her that she should remain at Thornhill till she showed a proper respect for me. That is why I declined the offer you made, Ada, but I was not ungrateful for it, though in my vexation towards my daughter, I replied more curtly than I should."

"Who is the companion of May; for of course you have not left her through all these months with no lady to take charge of her?"

Miss Digby knew perfectly well that he had done so, but she chose to assume that even Walter Thorne would be incapable of such treatment to his only child. He flushed, and impatiently replied:

"For a few months May was without a governess; but I have lately found a lady suited to the position, and she is now established at Thornhill. I have not yet received from my daughter the submission that I exact, or I should have brought her hither with me. You need have no fears on her account, Ada, for she is well looked after by Mrs. Black."

"I am happy to hear it," drily replied Miss Digby, "for I have thought a great deal of her lonely position since the death of her mother. I hoped that May would have written to me herself, but she has not done so."

With apparent frankness, Thorne said:

"She wished me to invite you to take up your abode at Thornhill, but I knew that to be impossible, while you retained the charge of Mr. Balfour's daughters. If May had shown a proper respect for my wishes, I would have brought her to you myself, and entreated you to receive her, also; but she is her mother's only child, and—and I believe she regards me as her natural enemy."

His companion cast a penetrating glance at him, which said, plainly enough:

"If such be the fact, is it not your own fault?" but she did not speak the words which she knew would be so offensive to him. She only said:

"I wish there was yet time to bring her hither before a change is made—but we go next week to Paris, and if you choose, May can join our party there."

"We will arrange about that hereafter," was the curt reply. "I did not come hither to be catechised about May, for she has annoyed me so much that I do not care to think of her when I can help it. Who were the two ladies I met going to the beach as I came hither?"

"The younger one was Alice Balfour—her companion is a friend of mine, who has recently returned from a tour in France. You will find Madame L'Epine a very accomplished and elegant woman—and she has had a great desire to see you."

"To see me! then perhaps she may have met with—Ada, I came hither to ask you if you will tell me all you know of Claire. You have corresponded with her, I suppose? Where is she? What has she been doing through this long interval of time in which I have refrained from seeking to know anything about her?"

"I can tell you this much, Walter; she did not break her heart over your desertion," said Miss Digby, with a little spice of malice, good woman as she was. "Claire sensibly accepted the position thrust upon her and made the best of it. She went to Paris, as you know, and sought out her brother: he was a wealthy banker, and he used his fortune magnificently for the gratification of his young sister. M. Latour had no family of his own, and he lavished on Claire everything that money could command. He settled on her an estate of greater value than the one your father believed Agnes would possess, and if he had been aware of Claire's existence before she arrived in Paris, he would have dowered her so nobly that even Colonel Thorne must have been reconciled to the romantic marriage you made."

"All of which only proves what blind, short-sighted creatures we are. If it be true that all mortals have a good and an evil angel contending for ever for the mastery over them, the latter must often have got the best of it when the battle was fought over me. My life has been a sad failure, Ada, for I have brought misery to others, and in so doing, have made myself wretched. I do not attempt to play the character of a pining sentimentalist, for the purpose of enlisting your sympathies, for I hardly deserve that they should be wasted upon me; but I should have been a better man if such adverse influences had not been brought to bear upon me."

"I believe that, Walter, I can do you that much justice; though I think you might have found more contentment in your last marriage had you acted differently towards poor Agnes. She loved you devotedly when she became your wife."

With sudden passion, Thorne said:

"It is easy to reason about the actions of others, and condemn them, although the censors would have done no better, had they been placed in the same position. You understand human nature, Ada Digby, and you must know that the very devotion of a woman who was forced on my acceptance was distasteful to me—that it aroused in me the tyrant's will to crush her who had been instrumental in destroying my first beautiful dream of love and constancy to the one woman I have ever loved. If Agnes had not presumed to act the part of the injured party, when she discovered the truth, I might have acted differently—I think I should; but her temper was as bitter as mine, and—well, you know the result, and we will not speak of it."

"No, let us not speak of what is irrevocable. Do you wish me to understand that you still cherish your early preference for Claire, Walter?"

Thorne hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I can scarcely assert so much as that. If I could see her again as lovely, as bewitching, and as much devoted to me as in those early days, I would gladly return to my old allegiance; but from what you said just now, I am led to believe that Claire has stifled all memory of that bitter past, and she may, long ere



[ADMIRER, NOT RECOGNISED.]

this, have found some one to console her for my desertion."

"She has led a gay and brilliant life, but she has not married again, if that is what you mean."

"But she must have had many lovers." So beautiful a creature as Claire was, placed in the position you describe, can scarcely have remained true to her first love, even if she has not chosen to give her hand to any of her adorers. I have thought of her a great deal since Agnes died. My first impulse was to seek her out; but I reflected that it might be only to meet the scorn and contempt I am sure she feels for him who had not the courage to defy opposition, and stand by the pledges he had made. My fate has been a very untoward one, Ada, but I have myself to blame for it, as much as the tyrannical will of my father."

"If you seek Claire in good faith, Walter—if you are willing to restore her to her true position, even if she be not so attractive as in those early days, she may be touched by your return to your old love, and receive you kindly. But I must tell you that her brother died a ruined man, and she sacrificed the greater portion of her own settlement to liquidate the debts he left behind him."

After a pause he replied:

"If I can arrange my affairs here, I shall go to Paris in a few months. When I have seen Claire, and understand my own wishes better than I do now, I shall decide as to my course of action. I wished very earnestly to learn something of her from you; but she may be so much changed in every respect from what she was, that—that the dead love may not again spring to life either in her heart or mine."

"As to the last I cannot answer, of course; but that she is still considered an attractive and charming woman, I can assure you, on the authority of my friend, Madame L'Epine."

"She knew her then—has met with her in society?"

"Yes, she knew her intimately. In fact, I believe that there is some tie of relationship between them."

What induced Miss Digby to say this she could hardly have explained herself. She found herself unconsciously taking part with her friend against the man who wavered in the manly and straightforward course which would have saved him from playing the part that had been decreed to him by the woman he was incapable of considering before himself. His egotistical fears that the object of his early passion would prove less adorable—less easy of approach, than the trusting child whose opening life

had been blighted by him, disgusted her, and took from her all desire to thwart the wishes of Claire.

By her last assertion she prepared Thorne for any resemblance he might detect between his repudiated wife and the lady who was so soon to be presented to him as a stranger; for Miss Digby began to think that it would be best for Claire to win him without allowing a suspicion of her identity to dawn upon him. If he approved her, he would condescend to repair the wrong of which she had been the victim; if not, the inference was obvious, that he would act as if the past had never been.

Her kindly heart hardened towards him; she remembered all his harshness to Agnes, and she thought that he merited retribution if ever a man did. From that moment she surrendered him to Claire to work her spells on, either for weal or for woe. She would remain passive, and hold sacred the confidence reposed in her.

Thorne asked with some appearance of interest:

"Is there any family resemblance between this lady and Claire? I was not aware that she had any relations in this country."

"Madame L'Epine was one of the Courtney family," replied Miss Digby, with perfect coolness. "You know that Claire's mother was also a Miss Courtney. I can imagine that, at her age, Claire would look very much as Madame L'Epine now does."

"Then I can form some idea of what changes have taken place in *ma belle Rosebud* as I used to call her," he replied, with a slight laugh. "But I can hardly expect the mature flower from which the first glory has departed, to be as captivating as the rose with all its sweetest leaves unfolded."

"You can soon judge for yourself, for I hear the voice of Alice, and in a few moments she will be here."

(To be continued.)

ONE day this week while workmen were engaged in excavating the ground for the new foundation of Temple Hall, they discovered a portion of a door, richly gilt, of the sixteenth century, and in a state of excellent preservation.

THE SALE OF POISONS ACT.—A case in which a chemist exposed himself to the penalties of the Sale of Poisons Act has been heard at Bow-street. Poison had been sold to a young woman, who had afterwards attempted to commit suicide, and not one of the provisions of the new enactment had been complied with. The bottle had not been labelled, nor had the name and address of the unknown purchaser

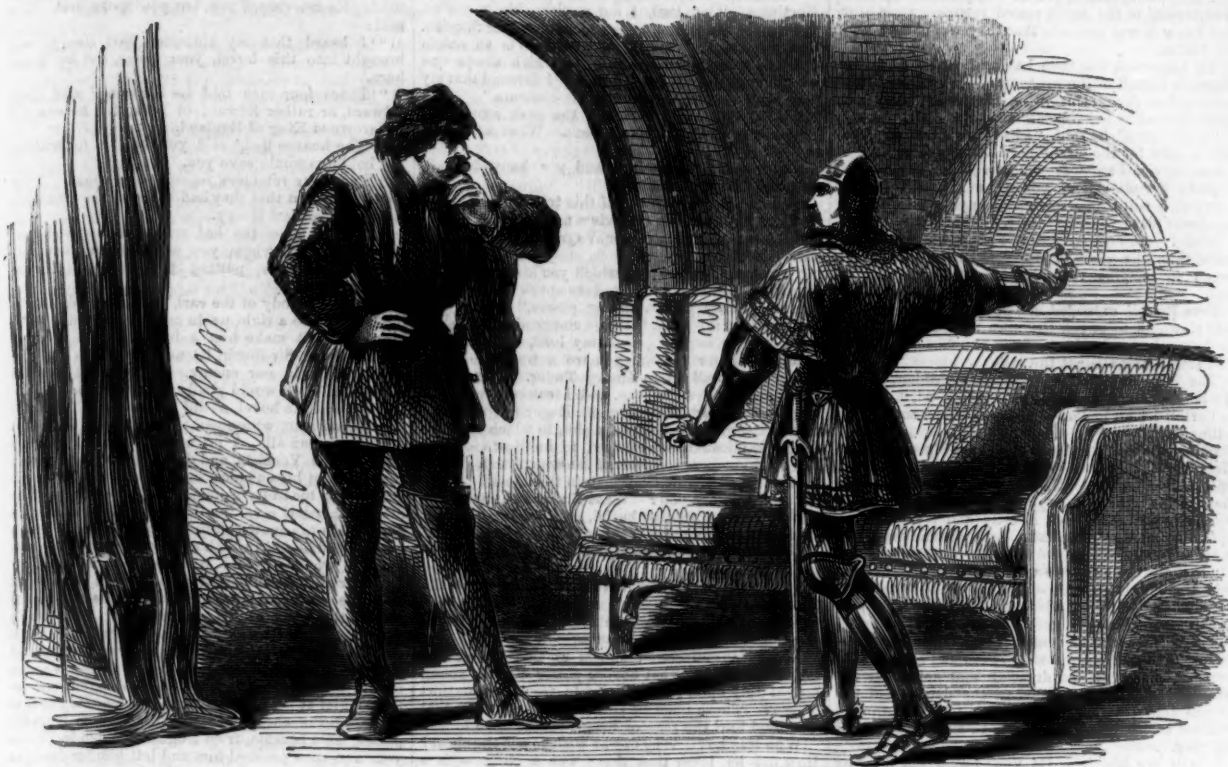
been taken. The offending chemist was not, however, before the magistrate, who did not inquire as to his name, "as he might be unaware of the existence of an Act so recently passed." Had he been charged with the offence, a fine of 5*l.* must have been inflicted on conviction.

THE VOLUNTEERS have forwarded a memorial to Sir John Pakington, showing the annual cost of maintaining the different branches of the volunteer force to be:—Mounted cavalry and field artillery, 180*l.* per troop or battery; garrison artillery, 130*l.*; and rifles, 105*l.* per company. The present grant yields to each of the above 75*l.* per annum, leaving a deficiency of 105*l.* for the first, 55*l.* for the second, and 30*l.* for the third branch of the Volunteer service.

THE NEW AMERICAN POSTAGE STAMPS.—The designs of the new United States Postage Stamps are described as follows:—The two cent stamp has for a vignette a mail carrier on horseback; the three cent, a mail train under steam; the five cent retains the miniature of Washington; the ten cent has a copy of the signing of the Declaration of Independence (from Trumbull's painting in the Rotunda of the Capitol); and the thirty cent, the surrender of Cornwallis, from the picture by Trumbull.

PURCHASE OF A VALUABLE PAINTING.—A few months ago at the sale of the late Mr. Benson, a Canon of Worcester Cathedral, a large picture called in the catalogue "*Christ bearing the Cross*," was sold to a broker for three or four pounds. Not knowing its value the broker resold the picture, which was very dirty, to a working painter named Albert, who cleaned it. Albert was offered first 20*l.*, then 50*l.*, then 100*l.* for his prize, but was deaf to all bidders until a Worcester tradesman offered 700 guineas for the picture, which he accepted.

SINGULAR BREACH OF PROMISE CASE.—In 1860, Mr. T. J. Marks became engaged to a Miss Smith, residing in county Louth, but broke off the engagement to go to British Columbia. Thence he wrote, and the engagement was renewed. In August, 1867, the plaintiff sold off his farm in Columbia, and came home to get married. When he had reached Canada a letter awaited him from Miss Smith, stating that she could not really love him, that the supposed affection she had had for him was a mistake, and that the engagement should be broken off. She shortly afterwards married Mr. Thomas Rowlands, joint defendant, who wrote to the plaintiff stating that he had long possessed the affections of the young lady. Mr. Marks has obtained, through the Irish Court of Queen's Bench, 200*l.* damages for the breach of promise.



[AN INSOLENT GIANT.]

THE FLOWER GIRL.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE earl, having given his orders to Andrew Tarl, returned in no good humour to his private reception-room.

He paced the apartment angrily, and then pausing near the couch, lifted the cloak and gazed darkly upon the sleeping sorceress.

"This wretched thing," he muttered, "this mass of vice and besotted appetite is my mother. Well, indeed, has she kept the secret these forty and odd, nay, nearly fifty, years. Will she never die? Will this unwieldy body and cunning brain outlast my life? I have wished for and looked forward to the time when I should be motherless; for the existence of my mother is a continual danger to my rank, wealth, and life. Will she never die?"

He replaced the cloak over the ugly, swollen, reeking visage.

With a face full of disgust and evil thoughts, he turned away and struck a silver bell upon the table.

"Bid my armourer attend," he said to the servitor who responded to the signal. "I would be relieved of this harness of iron and steel, which I have worn all day to please the king."

The armourer and his assistant soon divested the wearied earl of his mail, and he was proceeding to bathe before taking refreshment, when a servitor entered, saying:

"Sir Mortimer Du Vane."

"Ah, by my life, I had forgotten," exclaimed the earl. "Here, knaves! on with my armour again in haste. See that the knight be detained below until I send for him. Where is he?"

"In the great hall below, my lord."

"The household?"

"None dare retire, my lord, while the earl is up," replied the servitor.

"Bid them disperse to their quarters, Anthony. Let only the night-guard remain on duty. Bid Bertoli, the Italian, to my presence."

The servitor withdrew, and soon afterwards a man, remarkable for his immense stature, and breadth of chest, strode into the apartment.

The earl said nothing to him until his armour was replaced, and then dismissing all, except the Italian, bade him draw near, addressing him in his own language, thus:

"Bertoli, how is your strength of limb, sharpness of eye, and quickness of hand?"

"Perfect, and as invincible as ever, my lord," re-

plied the giant, in a boasting tone, and stretching forth his enormous arms as if to display their volume of muscle.

Roger Vagram gazed upon this man admiringly. Bertoli, the Italian henchman of the earl, stood fully seven feet in height, erect, perfect in proportion, agile, supple and rapid in gesture. His swarthy face was handsome, despite the unusual magnitude of his features, and his keen black eyes sparkled like live coals, above his clear-cut and well-shaped Roman nose. There was a reckless, brutal expression in his face, however, which made all men shun familiarity with the man, and his name was associated with many deeds of violence.

Giants are generally good-natured, as if satisfied with the mere knowledge of their remarkable prowess, and unwilling to exercise the gift to the injury of weaker men.

Not so with Bertoli. He loved to use his enormous strength to crush and stifle, to beat and bruise. He was cruel by nature, vindictive and merciless.

He had been in the service of the earl hardly a year, yet was feared by the boldest of the many ruffians who lifted spear and battle-axe under the banner of the warlike noble.

"Bertoli, saw you one in the reception hall below, whom men call Mortimer Du Vane?" asked the earl.

"There entered a knight but a few moments since who gave his name thus, my lord, though I needed not his voice to tell me that."

"Ah, then, you have seen the knight before?"

"I met him once in battle, my lord. He fought under the banner of the King of France against the Burgundians," replied Bertoli, scowling.

"What of that meeting? You seem to remember it with displeasure."

"May I not, my lord, when this scar upon my face was slashed there by the stripling's sword?" replied the giant, laying his finger on a deep cicatrice which traversed his face.

"I have good cause to remember the man. See you, my lord, I served under the banner of Burgundy as captain of a troop of riders. One day we encountered this Sir Mortimer Du Vane, who, though as beardless as the palm of my hand, and with his lip scarce shaded with a moustache, commanded a squadron of the guards of Louis IX. My faith! the stripling charged upon us, and singled me out as his own. It was ill luck. I was not myself on that day, or I had swallowed him alive, spurs and all. He routed us, and wounded me. His skill with the sword was greater than mine, and he slashed me here upon the face before I could cry 'Heaven bless me!' Had I gotten my hands on him I would have

snapped his backbone, as a kitchen-maid snaps a 'merry-thought!'"

"You would like to try your hand at him again?"

"With the sword? Not I, my lord. Sir Mortimer is no child. There is not his equal in all England, and I doubt if there be in all Europe with the sword."

"Hist, Bertoli! I like not the man!" whispered the earl. "He too much resembles one whom I hated. Now know that the sword he wears has been tampered with, and he suspects it not. The blade will snap in his grasp if it meets yours. Can you pick a quarrel with him in the hall?"

"With any man and anywhere, my lord, if well paid for the risk. Your lordship is sure in the matter of the sword?"

"Certain. I trusted the affair to the royal armourer, when the sword of the knight was taken from him. See to it, and I will reward you well."

The giant left the room and descended to the hall, where Sir Mortimer awaited the leisure of the earl.

He had been kept waiting long enough to have wearied the patience of most men, but as his mind was full of thought he had not heeded the delay, as he paced the hall in silence, and with folded arms.

Bertoli placed his huge bulk in an insolent attitude right in the path of the knight, who raised his eyes in surprise as his steps carried him suddenly face to face with the giant.

Sir Mortimer never forgot a face, nor where he had seen it, and as his glance met that of Bertoli he eyed him sternly, and, unwilling to accept the affray he saw flaming in the Italian's insolent visage, was about to turn aside, when Bertoli said:

"Ho! so after all, we meet in London. I do remember a vow I made when this scar was forming, Sir Mortimer. I swore by the three Kings of Cologne, that if ever I met the fellow who made it I would tweak his nose, though it were in a church."

"It was a rash vow, Captain Bertoli, and not noble, for the wound was made in fair combat, and if my memory fail not, I think the same hand that made it saved Captain Bertoli from the rage of a score of French peasants, who clamoured to hang him for his outrages."

Sir Mortimer regarded the Italian calmly as he spoke, though his hand glided to the hilt of his sword—the sword which Nicholas Flame had taken from the body of one of the king's assassins.

"You lie, sir knight!" said Bertoli, irritated by the calm contempt of the soldier.

Sir Mortimer's cheek flushed at the coarse insult,

and his eyes sparkled, yet he was prudent. He saw that several of the earl's armed retainers were near, and knew it was probable that they would side with the Italian.

He suspected, too, from having heard the servitor summon Bertoli to the presence of the earl, and from having seen him return, that the whole affair was premeditated by the treacherous earl.

"Look you," he said, "I have an affair on hand which calls for the attention of Earl De Montfort, in whose service I suppose you are. That discharged, Captain Bertoli, and as you are a knight, though a base one, I will to-morrow chastise your insolence at whatever place you may name."

"Bah! your courage will not keep without better brine than fills your veins," replied the giant, who began to imagine that the knight was afraid of him.

Here Bertoli extended his great arm with deliberate slowness to tweak the nose of the knight, but he instantly received a buffet in the face which sent him staggering against the wall.

The blow was dealt as quick as lightning, and as the hand of the knight was gloved in steel, it seemed to Bertoli for an instant that he had been smitten by a thunderbolt.

Before he could recover and draw his sword, Sir Mortimer had his own out, drawing it as he rushed upon the confused ruffian, and by an adroit movement of his right foot, tripping up Bertoli's heels.

The huge Italian fell heavily and lay senseless upon the floor, gasping and bleeding from his mouth, nose, and ears.

"If there are any here who desire to attack me," said the knight, as his dark eye flashed defiance around him, "let them advance and try strength with Mortimer Du Vane."

There was no movement among the earl's retainers to attack one whose prowess had so suddenly overthrown a man so dreaded and noted for his strength as Bertoli, and when the defiance of the knight told his name, all shrank from assailing a warrior whose deeds were sung in many a ballad of that day.

"Will Sir Mortimer Du Vane follow me into the presence of the earl?" said a chamberlain, approaching at that moment.

"Lead on. It is time the scant courtesy of an audience was granted to me," replied the knight, haughtily, as he ascended the stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

THE earl received Sir Mortimer coldly, saying: "Sir Mortimer Du Vane, the business must be pressing that compels you to disturb me at this late hour. I trust, however, that it may soon be despatched."

"Our interview had like never to have come at all, my lord, thanks to the insolence of your Italian bravo, who is well punished for his impertinence, though it may be that there are others more to be blamed than he."

"I do not understand you, Sir Mortimer," said the guilty earl, unable to meet the angry light flaming in the haughty face of his visitor. "If any of my servitors have been insolent to you, I will see that they be well punished. But the hour is very late—"

"What I have to say to Earl De Montfort, may be said quickly, but better with no hearers," interrupted the knight, as he glanced towards the chamberlain.

"Withdraw, Anthony, but be within sound of my voice," commanded the earl. "Now, Sir Mortimer."

The knight's cautious eye detected the presence of a form beneath the cloak spread over the couch, and with a boldness which warned Lord Roger that his visitor was not to be trifled with, he advanced to it and tossed aside the cloak.

"Ha, the sorceress!" exclaimed Sir Mortimer, as he recoiled from the red and bloated face.

"Back, dead man! Back into your chest!" cried Siballa, awaking at the moment, and starting up as her eyes fell upon the knight.

She stared at him for a moment, and then sank back again, overcome by the power of strong drink.

"The dead man in the chest," said Sir Mortimer, after a pause, during which he surmised the condition of the sorceress. "My lord, but for what transpired in the palace of the king, I should have other business than that of a private nature, and the maiden terror of this old woman leads me to ask at once this question: Where is the chest in which the dead man sleeps?"

The earl had grown pale when the sorceress mumbled her drunken fears, but as the knight asked this strange question he trembled in every limb.

He recovered his audacity in an instant, and called up a semblance of indignant surprise, saying:

"I have heard of Sir Mortimer Du Vane, but never that he was a lunatic. Dead man in a chest! What new I—"

"Silence, Roger Vagram," interrupted Sir Mortimer. "My lord, I am a plain, blunt soldier, and my tongue is like my sword, not used for flourish. I have heard that in this palace there is an oaken chest, iron-bound and strong, in which sleeps one who did not die on Towton field. I demand that my eyes shall view that chest and its contents."

"He is certainly mad," said the earl, scornfully. "There is no sense in his speech. What mummery is this?"

"No mummery, my lord, and you know it well, aye, and that woman also."

"Sir Mortimer Du Vane, if this trifling be all your business with me, our interview must cease—"

"It has but begun, Roger Vagram. You know I am not mad."

"Not mad! Were that which you hint at true, Sir Mortimer, you would be mad to speak of it in my presence, in my palace, in my power," replied the earl, smiting the table with his clenched fist.

"Not more in your power, my lord, than you are in mine. Roger Vagram you are a traitor to King Richard, as well as to Henry Tudor. Your sham arrest has deceived no one, and I can prove to the king that but for rash judgment, Roger Vagram had never attempted to disclose a plot, in which he is as deeply implicated as he hoped to implicate others. But I am not here to speak of the conspiracy. I am here to speak of this dead man in the chest."

"And who are you? What if a knave, unworthy of the rites of Christian burial, does rot in a chest in De Montfort palace? What is that to Sir Mortimer Du Vane?" cried the earl, bewildered by the bearing of his visitor.

"That you may learn hereafter. Shall I see the chest or not?"

"And if I say there be no chest?"

"You will lie," replied the knight, bluntly. Roger Vagram started aghast at this daring and insulting reply. What unseen power did this young knight rely upon to see him safe from De Montfort palace? There must be truth in his assertion that he would hurl the rage of King Richard upon him.

Who was he? Why did he wish to see the chest? How did he learn that there was a chest with a skeleton in it. How did anybody know that? Ah, it had been revealed by Nicholas Flame. Yet, Nicholas Flame could never have discovered who slept in that chest.

"I would say, Roger Vagram, that you lied," continued the knight. "Listen. At the bloody battle of Towton, fell a noble gentleman struggling for the rights of Henry of Lancaster, but his body could never be found by his friends. There were four men who fought under your banner, you were then Sir Roger Vagram—and these four men were ordered by you to search the field after the battle to find the noble gentleman of whom I speak. They found him alive, but senseless. They carried him from the field against your instructions, for you had ordered them to slay him without mercy, if found. They bore him to a farm-house, a mere hovel, and there left him to live or die as heaven should decree. You passed that way and recognised the wounded man. The command of King Edward had gone forth that none of the wounded should be slain; especially was the name of this noble gentleman included in the list of those whom King Edward ordered should be tenderly cared for if found alive. Your schemes of ambition demanded the death of this nobleman. You alone, of all your escort, recognised the wounded and insensible gentleman. You dismissed your escort. You remained alone with the nobleman, with the exception of one man whom you thought to be dying in a corner of the hovel. There was a large oaken chest in the room, the chest I demand to see. You approached the gentleman to stab him. You twice raised the dagger. Why did you not strike?"

The knight paused and gazed sternly into the terror-stricken face of his appalled listener. Appalled to speechlessness, because the knight's measured words were true, and told what Roger Vagram had for years believed known only to his own heart.

"You did not strike, because you feared the deed would be traced to your hand. The four men who had carried the nobleman to the hovel had told you that there was not a wound upon the body of the noble. They had found him stunned, not pierced, nor gashed. He was struck down by a blow upon his helmet. If you stabbed him to death those four men would swear that your hand did the deed. But die he must. As you doubted a woman entered the hovel. The woman upon that couch. She was loaded with plunder taken from the dead. You and she raised the nobleman and placed him in the chest. If you had had time you would not have done so, but you were bewildered, for the woman told you the king was approaching. You heard the trumpets of his heralds. The insensible gentleman was put into the chest. You closed the lid. Soon after, the king entered the hovel, and with him

the four men who had carried the nobleman from the field. He recognised you, but you spoke first. You said:

"I heard that my kinsman, Earl Henry, was brought into this hovel, your grace, but he is not here."

"These four men told me the same," said King Edward, or rather Edward of York, for he was not yet crowned King of England.

"The knaves lied," said you, boldly, for nothing but boldness would save you.

"Your four retainers feared your anger. They could not assert that they had believed the man upon the bed to be Earl Henry."

"The man upon the bed was that supposed dead man spoken of, whom you and that woman had placed there after putting the nobleman in the chest."

"Seek the body of the earl," said Edward, "for we hold him to be a right noble gentleman, and if he be alive, we will make him a friend to the house of York. Come, Sir Roger, let us together go over the field. He was our enemy, but of such enemies Edward of York would gladly make friends."

"You left the hovel, so did the woman. The supposed dead man, whose name was Roland Bart, had heard and seen all. A price had been set upon his head by the Yorkists, and dreading recognition and the return of his enemies, he escaped from the hovel. But he was too badly wounded to live, and though he dragged himself several miles through the woods, he perished in the snow before the next dawn. But ere he perished he fell in with another wounded Lancastrian, to whom he told what he had seen. This Lancastrian was Nicholas Flame. A price was also set upon the head of Nicholas Flame, yet he resolved to rescue the body of his master, Earl Henry. He disguised himself, and as soon as he was able visited the hovel. The chest had disappeared. He traced it to De Montfort palace. He found Roger Vagram master there. He entered your service, but you detected him at the very moment that he was about to carry off the chest. He was forced to fly from the palace, from London, from England. Even in France your assassins pursued him and left him for dead; as they had slain, one by one, the four men who had recognised and borne the earl from the field. Why did you bear the chest to this palace? Why did you not bury it?"

Roger Vagram could make no reply. His terror mastered his voice. If he spoke he might criminate himself. He would wait and hear all.

"I will tell you why you did not bury the chest," said the knight. "Because you feared that you might be detected, that the chest might be dug up, and the remains of the murdered earl be recognised; for King Edward has hinted his belief of foul play. You feared the spies of the king. You feared the spies of the friends of the dead earl. What does not guilt fear? You feared everything, and as you had walled up the chest in a room of this palace, you deemed it safest to let it remain there."

"If it were walled up," said Lord Roger, quickly, "how did Nicholas Flame know that it was in this palace?"

"Your very question is an admission of the fact," replied the knight. "Nicholas Flame was familiar with every apartment of this palace. When he was in your household, in disguise, he discovered that a small room in the east wing had been walled up. He suspected that the chest which he had traced to this palace was there. He did not rest till he had effected an entrance into the walled-up room through the ceiling of the room below. He saw the chest. It is there now."

"Heaven's life!" cried Lord Roger, losing his prudence in his rage. "Who are you, that you take any interest in the madcap lies of that renegade, Nicholas Flame?"

"Softly, my lord," replied Sir Mortimer, sternly. "Your violence does not, cannot frighten me. I must see that chest. I must see its contents."

The guilty earl trembled under the calm power of those steady eyes—eyes as like those which had often looked scorn and contempt upon him from the handsome, haughty face of Henry De Ross, the missing Earl De Montfort.

"Sir Mortimer," he said, "there is such a chest. Let us go and look at it."

With these words he arose from his seat, while his treacherous eyes sparkled with a sudden and fiendish resolve.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ominous countenance of the earl did not escape the notice of the knight, but Sir Mortimer was fearless by nature, and had not begun his present enterprise without having resolved to follow it to the end, despite all appearance of danger.

He knew that he walked amid perils of the most

formidable kind, and that Roger Vagram was not a man to halt in villany, especially when the halt might be ruin.

"Mark this, Roger Vagram," he said, as he laid his hand upon the arm of the earl. "There are those in London who know of my presence in this palace. There are those who will not fail to avenge me, if I fall—"

"Oh, then you are afraid of being hurt, young sir," interrupted the earl, scornfully. "You have begun, but it remains with you to pause or to go on. There is such a chest, or perhaps the foolish tale of Nicholas Flame had never been told. The fellow was for a time in my service, and I remember was discharged for theft, or something of that kind. I deem it an unwarrantable outrage upon your part, Sir Knight, to thus intrude upon what concerns you not; yet for the respect I bear for the fame of the noted soldier—"

"Enough, my lord. I have warned you that I trust you not. The time may come when my questioning shall be pointed with steel."

"Certainly, Sir Mortimer, your insolence shall not go unpunished at proper season. Will you attend me?"

"At your service, my lord," replied the knight, as the earl took up a lamp.

They left the apartment, and preceded by the earl, the daring knight traversed several halls and corridors of the great palace. At first the knight noticed evidence of the great power of the earl in the number of his household and retainers, who still remained awake, sauntering here and there, but after entering the east wing he found that portion of the palace comparatively deserted.

At length the earl paused before a door and said:

"This door opens into an apartment which adjoins that which was walled up. Do you persist in your demand?"

"Why not? I have seen nothing to change my determination," replied Sir Mortimer, drawing the hilt of his sword more to the front.

The earl took a key from his bosom and fitted it to the lock. The door was opened, and a dark and vacant apartment was revealed. The dust of years had collected upon the floor, proving that during all that time no one had entered there.

"To enter the walled-up room, you or I must break through that wall," said the earl, pointing across the apartment.

Whether it was the echo of his voice or not, even as he spoke, and as if the wall yielded to supernatural causes, all that portion which had been bricked and mortared twenty-three years before by his own hands, aided by the sorceress, crumbled down and crashed heavily upon the floor.

The place where a door had been was now open. Time had undermined the masonry, and the slight jar caused by the voice of the earl, had toppled outwards the badly constructed work.

Still the earl was for an instant terrified by the event, and Sir Mortimer noticed that the lamp quivered in his trembling hand.

The vigilant knight noticed more. The mass of brick falling on the floor had sprung a trap-door at the very base of the wall.

Had the wall not fallen, or had it fallen into the secret room beyond to break it down, Sir Mortimer must have stepped upon that trap-door, and would have been precipitated into the dark depths below.

The knight gazed sternly upon the pale face of the guilty earl, as his intended treachery was thus almost miraculously revealed, and said bitterly:

"Had I advanced as you desired, I should have been dead and you not trembling with guilt, but triumphing in successful villany. My lord, tremble; for heaven watches over us. Come, let us examine the secrets of the walled-up apartment. Lead the way, my lord. You are not too old to leap over that yawning pit."

The knight drew his sword as he spoke, and with a quick backward gesture closed the door behind him.

"Advance, Roger Vagram, and let us see if Nicholas Flame lied, or if Roland Bart deceived him."

It is rare to find great cunning and great courage in the same individual, yet in Roger Vagram both were united. Still he was surprised by the sudden demand of the strange young knight to see a chest whose very existence he had for many years believed unknown, except to himself and his evil mother.

Still more had he been astonished when this young knight recounted the facts connected with the brutal murder of Earl Henry.

More than all was he surprised by the sudden fall of the masonry, by which his design to get rid of this daring and dangerous person was completely frustrated.

When he so readily agreed to conduct Sir Mortimer to the chest, he expected to behold him sinking to sudden death through the treacherous floor.

Twice already had the hand of fate saved the life of Sir Mortimer since his entrance into De Montfort palace. Bertoli had failed; the trap-door was revealed.

"Is this man invulnerable?" thought the amazed earl, staring at the knight. "Why does he wish to see the man who sleeps in the chest? What was Henry De Ross to him? What could he have been, since this young man could scarcely have been born when Earl Henry perished?"

"Advance," repeated the knight, sternly, and lifting his sword. "Traitor, do not think that my sword will fail in a contest with yours," he added, as the earl half drew his own weapon. "This is not the blade which was weakened by your command."

"Ah, he is protected by the evil one!" thought Roger Vagram, as his keen eye glanced along the perfect blade of the weapon. "He detected the flaw and procured another sword."

A fear, strange to his hardy soul, began to shake the courage of Roger Vagram. He trembled before the bright light of courage and truth beaming in the eyes of Sir Mortimer, and moving cautiously, passed across the trap-door.

As he stood in the long-sealed doorway it occurred to him that he might suddenly spring upon Sir Mortimer as he moved across the pit and hurl him down.

"Back!" commanded the wary knight, who read his thoughts. "Back to the farther wall of that room."

"Curses seize him!" muttered the earl, retreating reluctantly. "Aye, and curses upon my courage which fails to dare this man. Some spell is upon me."

There was a spell, a spell as potent as any woven by the magic of old, the spell of guilty fear.

Sir Mortimer, sword in hand, leaped across the pit, and now both stood in the dark, damp and long-sealed chamber, with the mysterious oaken chest before them.

(To be continued.)

PERFECT LOVE.

Oh! let me still but breathe the air,
The blessed air, that's breathed by thee;
And e'en if on its wings it bear
Illness or death, 'tis life to me.

"DOCTOR MANNING, tell me of my dearest friend and schoolmate, Dora Austin?" I asked. "You were her physician, adviser, and confidant; and I feel sure from no one else could I obtain so full and true a statement of the events which transpired after I left her ten years ago."

"When did you see her last?"

"The winter of 185—. I was with her, at the time of her engagement to Abner Grayson. I remained until after the arrival of her cousin from Europe," I answered.

"I was absent, then. I have often wished to know the particulars of those few months. Tell me, if you please, all that happened during your visit, and then you shall hear her sorrowful story," said the doctor, and rising he walked to the window for a few moments—I think to conceal and calm his agitation. He returned, seated himself, and motioned me to proceed.

"As I told you before, Dora and I were schoolmates. I accepted the invitation so often urged, to visit her, and there met Abner Grayson. I knew of him well. She would many times, in our school days, tell me how handsome and talented he was. How kind to her. I knew she loved him; long before she would admit it even to herself. When I would tell her so, she would answer, 'I love him as if he were my brother, he has ever been as such to me; nothing else. We have grown up together. Our farms join. Abner is such an ardent admirer of beauty; he could never look on one so very plain looking as I with any feelings other than simple friendship.'"

"I had been with Dora about a week, when one afternoon I was sitting reading in a deeply-curtained window. I was so absorbed in my book, that I had no knowledge of anyone entering the room, until my attention was attracted by the deep, manly voice of Mr. Grayson, wooing Dora in soft, loving tones.

"My first idea was to let them know of my presence. Then I thought it would be better for me to remain quiet than to interrupt them, at that moment so fraught with fond hopes and bright anticipations.

"Thus it was that I became a listener to their betrothal.

"Dora still clung to the idea that he could not love her because she was not beautiful. She said:

"Abner, wait until you have seen my cousin before you give your heart to me. You will surely love her better than you possibly can me. Remember how fond you were of her years ago, in our childhood. She is far more beautiful now. Papa says she is

the fairest woman he has ever seen. She is coming home to us. She is an orphan now. Next month she will be here."

"Then he answered her:

"You dear, shy little bird—do not try to fly away and bid me seek a mate of brighter plumage! Come nestle down beside me, love, and let me try to prove to you how lovely you truly are. I admire the beautiful, Dora, but I love the good. You are all and everything I would have you; nothing wanting. I would not change one feature, one glance of yours, darling, for the fairest woman on earth. I know your heart, how true and pure it is, and I must woo until I win it. Whisper to me, Dora, that you love me a little."

"You know I do love you, Abner. Who else have I had to love, since my childhood, but papa and you? You have been playmate, friend and brother."

"Excuse me, doctor, but then came forth the selfish, exacting nature of man, in the words:

"Dora, do not talk of such love to me. 'Tis not as this I would be loved. I would have you

Love me not in fancy; love me not in fear;
But love me as if life doubled in thee when I am near."

Thus, or not at all, would I be loved."

"Abner," she answered, "if you will tell me this again, after you have seen Lillian, then I will be to you all you wish. Your happiness is dearer to me than my own."

"Then you will soon be truly my own. Come, little one, look at yourself in this mirror. Why, truly, you are growing beautiful. Your eyes are beaming brightly; and now your cheeks are like blush roses!"

"He led her from the glass, and out on the piazza; and I escaped to my room."

"Very devoted he continued to be; and Dora really looked so happy that her little plain face became quite pretty."

"The next month brought the beautiful Lillian Frost."

"Lillian Frost! How wonderfully were her name and nature adapted to each other!—beautifully fair, and cruelly cold."

"Dora's fears proved true. Abner loved Lillian and forsook her. I never knew the result to Dora. I married in a short time, and never heard from her again."

"Now, doctor, you must go on, and tell me what I am so anxious to know."

"Oh, curse him! but for him she might have been mine. Pardon me, madam. I never knew of this. I suspected, but never was certain of an engagement."

"Dora Austin was the only woman I ever loved, save my mother. I was much older than she—by twenty years. I always feared Abner Grayson was my favoured rival. I returned from my travels, and found him on the eve of marriage with Miss Frost. I thought I had mistaken their friendship for love. I placed my heart before Dora."

"In a true womanly manner, she told me that she had loved, and in all probability her heart would never know another love."

"She dismissed her lover, but secured a true, firm friend."

"About the time of the marriage, the fever was making sad havoc in our locality. Very few of the country folks went near the neighbouring villages or towns. Abner so blindly happy and busy in preparation for his approaching nuptials, would go frequently into the town."

"They were married, at Dora's home, and immediately started for a tour."

"Twenty-four hours only had passed, when the terrible news reached us that Abner was ill with the fever, and was about thirty miles from us."

"In a few hours more, Lillian was back again with Dora and Mr. Austin."

"She had fled and left him."

"Then, for the only time in my life, I saw Dora Austin excited—almost maddened."

"You have fled—left him to suffer and, perhaps, die with strangers. You, his wife! Where are your vows, girl? Strewn to the winds. Shame, shame! This is your love, your devotion! I will teach you woman's friendship. I am going to him—to comfort, nurse, and save him, with heaven's blessing, and return him to the arms of his devoted wife."

"Her father and we all pleaded against this; but it was of no use. She was determined. I tried every way to induce her to give up the idea, but in vain. I offered to go and remain with him. She would not even listen, but proceeded to make all arrangements. I know she would die if she did not go. Her mother died of heart-disease. She inherited that affection from her. Mr. Austin knew this well; so he yielded. I shall never forget the look of sorrow on the old gentleman's face when she returned for a second embrace, and, throwing her arms around him, gazed long and tenderly in his eyes, and said:

"You dear, good father! It will not be long before we meet again, and be happier than now!"

"Come with me," she said to me.

"We were soon with the suffering man. The attack had been violent from the first. He was entirely out of his mind—knew no one. He would clasp Dora's hand and call her his darling Lilly, and insist that she should rest and not worry about him; she must take care of herself and not mar her beauty. Then again he would say, 'Send for Dora,' and wonder why she did not come and help his poor wife.

"And so he continued to take her for his wife—lavish on her words of love; and reproaches that Dora would not come to him.

"My heart was wrung terribly to see how this mistake was striking a death-blow to the devoted girl. Her strength was fast giving way. I knew well if she were attacked with the fever in her present exhausted state, it must prove nearly fatal.

"She insisted that I should write her 'will.' You know, in her own right, she was immensely wealthy. Her grandfather left her—his only heir—his all. She was deeply impressed with the belief she should die.

"Dear friend, if I live, all is well. If I die, not setting to right my household, it would be all very wrong," she said, when I tried to chase these gloomy thoughts from her mind. She left ten thousand pounds to Abner's first child, and asked to have him or her—whichever it might be—named for her.

"The remainder she left to erect and support on her estate an asylum or hospital, and to be under my control and direction.

"You must visit this institution. We called it, 'The Austin Hospital.'

"She did not sign her 'will' the day it was written, but said:

"In three days I shall be twenty-one. I don't think I shall be ill before that time."

"It was her birth-day. She was sitting beside the sick man. He was sleeping. She turned to me and whispered low:

"When he awakes, he will be better, and probably know us. He will live, unless a severe shock is given him. Do not let him know she died. If he asks for her, I will answer him."

"It was as she said. He opened his eyes; his mind was in the gaze. In a scarcely audible voice, he said:

"Dora! where is Lilly? Have I been ill?"

"Lillian is safe now. She was in some danger at one time. You will see her soon. You have been very ill. Don't talk any more now."

"You will see, my dear madam, how she told the truth in her answer,—but in words to comfort and deceive him. Again he whispered: 'Dear, good Dora! Heaven bless you! You have suffered for me. You look ill, go lie down.' He held out his hand—she clasped it and said:

"Yes, Abner, I will now that you are better. I do not feel very well, I'm tired a little. This is my birth-day, Abner. Give your sister a kiss," and she bent over and pressed her lips to his. She gave him a look long and earnest, as she did her father, but of deeper love, and left his side.

"She never saw him more.

"She sent for me very soon after, and for two other friends—signed, and had her will witnessed. Then she grew rapidly ill.

"Constantly during her illness, she would cry:

"Do not tell him she died! Do not let him know it, please."

And then again:

"Do not think it was being with him that made me ill! It is not the fever, doctor, it is my head. You know mamma died so."

"She became conscious before she passed away, and said to me:

"My best friend! I have loved one better, but trusted none as I do you. Heaven bless you! I will watch and pray for your coming to meet me above. Promise me that I shall not be disappointed?"

"The last words she whispered were:

"Do not worry about me, Abner! It is my heart, not your sickness—not the fever."

"Truly so it was—her heart's devotion.

"I have often thought I might have won her if she had lived. I am endeavouring, by heaven's mercy, to meet her again. Sometimes I grow weary of waiting for the summons. I care not for life. I have lived amongst the most dreaded diseases, woeing death. At times I feel forgotten, neglected, and wonder why I cannot go with the many that are called. Then I am comforted. I feel her near me, and saying:

"You must stay—you have your father's will to do—his work to carry out."

"Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Heal the sick. Have pity for the poor. Be merciful after thy power. Freely ye have received, freely give."

"I know she watches over and waits for me, and I am happy."

"Tell me, doctor, of him? Did he know his wife died?"

"Most assuredly he did. She, in her miserable excuses, told him too truly of the devoted love of this noble woman, whose heart he had so trifled with.

"They are not happy. They have not deserved to be. I know that thoughts of Dora are seldom, if ever, absent from the mind of either.

"Lillian is ever thinking of the absent one, who saved her husband by her own sacrifice—and dying, tried to shield her from his reproach.

"Abner is constantly brooding over the young life cut short; of the fond, true heart, with whose last pulsation came a thought of peace for him.

"They have no children. This is a great disappointment to both. I think it is well.

"I should be sorry to see a miniature of Lillian, bearing the name of Dora Austin."

The doctor finished, and then I thought:

"Truly, there are men worthy of a woman's devotion. Had I not one beside me then?"

F. H. B.

SCIENCE.

THE Suez Canal Company have been fourteen years at work upon their gigantic labour, and they announce positively that the canal will be opened within a year from the present time. The canal is to be 100 miles long and 100 yards wide (at the water's edge). The depth throughout will be twenty-five feet in the middle.

ZINC may be given a fine black colour, according to Knaffl, by cleaning its surface with sand and sulphuric acid, and immersing for an instant in a solution composed of four parts of sulphate of nickel and ammonia in forty of water, acidulated with one part of sulphuric acid, washing and drying it. The black coating adheres firmly, and takes a bronze colour under the burnisher. Brass may be stained black with a liquid containing two parts arsenious acid, four hydrochloric acid, and one of sulphuric acid in eighty parts of water.

It is not generally known, but it nevertheless appears to be a fact, that the idea of printing fabrics by machinery originated with Dr. Charles Taylor, who was for sixteen years secretary of the Society of Arts. Dr. Taylor, in early life, was engaged in calico printing, at a time when, by the concurrent application of chemical and mechanical knowledge to the manufacture of cotton goods, the first impulse was given which has since carried this branch of our national industry to its present almost incredible magnitude. So active was Dr. Taylor in the application of the discoveries of Berthollet, that he also was the first person who produced for sale in the Manchester market an entire piece of calico bleached by oxymuriatic acid.

THE FIRST SEA-GOING STEAMER BUILT AT GLOUCESTER.—There sailed last week from Cardiff the steamer Pacifico, which is the first sea-going steamer built at Gloucester. The Pacifico has been built and engineered by Messrs. Fielding and Platt, of the Atlas Iron works, Gloucester, for a Liverpool firm, and is intended for towing purposes at Rio Janeiro. She is a wooden-built vessel, 102 ft. long by 18 ft. beam, and 8½ ft. depth of hold, coppered, and classed nine years in English Lloyd's; built under special survey, and exceedingly strong. Her machinery consists of a single-cylinder inverted engine. Cylinder 42 in. diameter and 24 in. stroke; steam jacketed, with surface condenser, and all modern improvements. The screw propeller is of gun metal, four-bladed, and 7 ft. diameter. The boiler has three furnaces and a superheater. The Pacifico, on her trial trip, drew 7½ ft. forward and 9 ft. aft, giving a speed of eleven knots per hour, on a low consumption of fuel.

VAUXHALL BRIDGE.—Mr. J. W. Grover, M. Inst. C.E., with reference to the dangers of the Vauxhall Bridge—"Sir,—The frequent accidents which are caused by the obstructive piers of the Vauxhall Bridge are only too well known to all your readers who ever have occasion to pass over or under that most ungainly structure. This morning I witnessed a sight which compels me, in the name of humanity, to crave a little of your valuable space to again denounce this erection. Two barges were swamped in mid-stream by being hurled against the abutments; the current at low-water being a perfect millrace. Four little children, as far as I could ascertain in the confusion the number, were drowned—the parents were saved. The scene on the shore, where the bereaved mother stood, was one which I need hardly describe as heartrending to a degree seldom witnessed, and doubly so when it is considered that

the disaster is caused by bad engineering, and might be easily avoided. Hardly a month passes without some wreck at the same spot, and often have I witnessed the penny steamers foiled in their repeated attempts to get through. Now the practical question is what can be done? We cannot restore the four poor children to their bereaved mother, but we can subscribe towards replacing her things which are lost. Mr. Jefferys, the clerk at the Bridge House, or myself, would be happy to receive subscriptions. A few chains, secured at different levels round the starlings, would not cost much, and might be the means of saving a small percentage of the lives which are yearly risked at the spot. And, lastly, I would ask why the bridge is allowed to remain as it is? One-sixth part of the water-way is blocked up with useless abutments 13 feet wide; these it is which cause the violent current. Dredging would do something, but would probably be dangerous to the foundations if carried to any extent. The only proper remedy is to reconstruct the work, to take out every other abutment, and throw some handsome cast-iron arches across; these would only be 169 feet span, or 6 feet less than the next bridge immediately above. In carrying out this work the gradients over the bridge might be improved; they are now so steep that a horse is kept to help carts up in winter."

PATENT MEDICINES.—Stamp duty was paid in the year ending March, 1898, on no less than 8,060,754 packets, boxes, &c., of medicines selling at 1s. or more. The tax produced 62,556*l*.

NEW ARRIVAL AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.—The two-horned rhinoceros at the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, is an object of considerable interest. He lives literally in clover, that being his principal food, although he is also partial to a bucket or two of bread and milk. He cost the Society 1,000*l*.

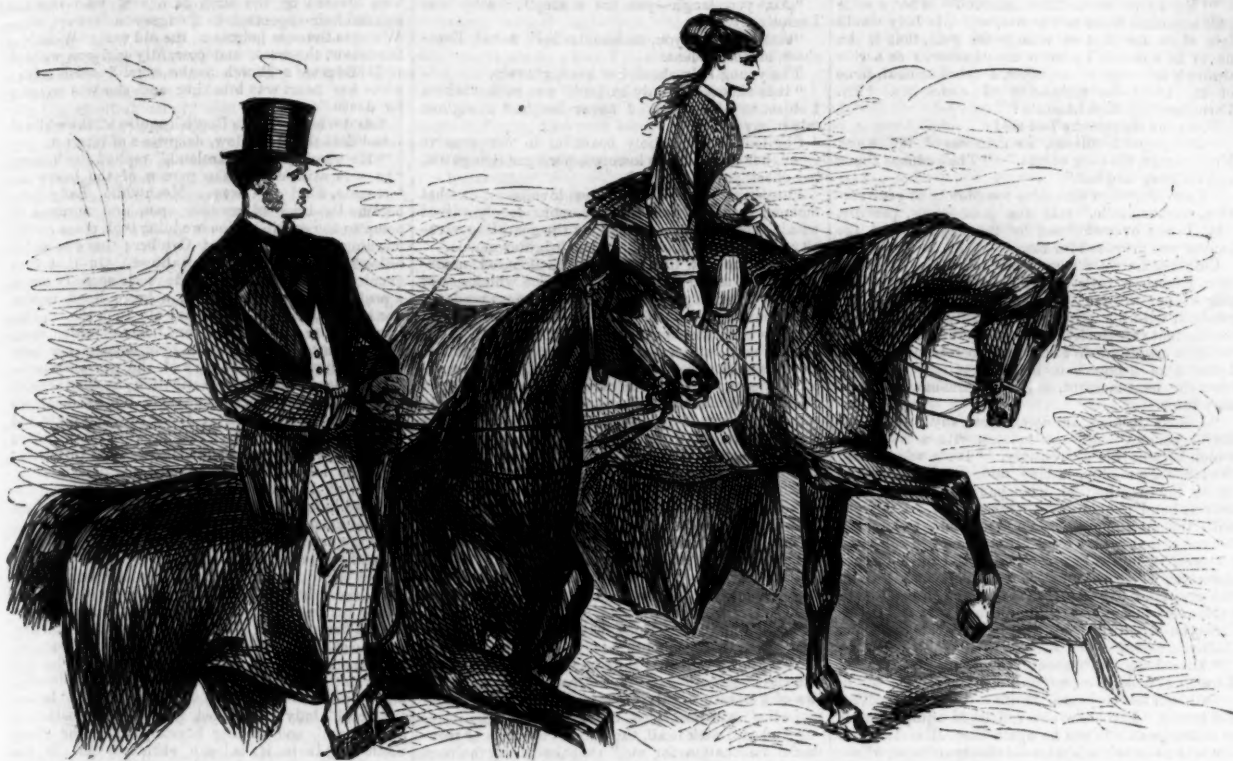
THE great male milliner of Paris last Sunday received a distinguished circle of ladies at tea at his residence. The ladies were all titled and of the highest and most ancient families. The affair passed off in grand style; all wore on their best behaviour and in their best clothes. The hero was dressed à la *chasse*, and was surrounded by a bevy of powdered flunkies.

THE new money coined in the reign of Edward I. was produced in the following manner:—First, the metal was cast into flat rectangular bars, very thin, and of some length. These were next cut into square pieces of the same size and weight, and which were afterwards trimmed and forged into a circular form. After this they were made soft by annealing, and clean by boiling in acid. The impressions were then given by die and hammer. This mode of coining seems to have remained in existence down to A.D. 1561.

THE PEERAGE TO MRS. DISRAELI.—The Queen has been pleased to direct letters patent to be passed under the great seal, granting the dignity of a Viscountess of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland unto Mary Ann, wife of the Right Hon. B. Disraeli, of Hughenden Manor, in the county of Bucks, by the name, style, and title of Viscountess of Beaconsfield, in the county of Bucks, and at her decease, the dignity of a Viscount of the said United Kingdom to heirs male of her body, lawfully begotten.

THE ABYSSINIAN EXPEDITION.—The Adjutant-General, Lord William Paulet, has announced in general orders that her Majesty has been graciously pleased to sanction the following regiments bearing the word "Abyssinia" on their colours, in commemoration of their services during the Abyssinian expedition of 1867-8, viz.:—The 3rd (Prince of Wales's) Dragoon Guards, the 4th (King's Own Royal) Regiment of Infantry, the 26th (Cameronian) Regiment of Infantry, the 33rd (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Infantry, and the 45th Nottinghamshire (Sherwood Foresters) Regiment of Infantry.

THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF CANTERBURY.—The late Archbishop of Canterbury (Longley) was the fourth of the Primates of All England who had previously held the Archbishopric of York. Grindal was thence translated to the higher dignity, in 1576, Herring in 1747, Hutton in 1757, and Longley in 1862. Grindal used to send Queen Elizabeth grapes from his vineyard at Fulham (he was then Bishop of London); and his allusions to the vanity of dress, which were supposed to be levelled at the Queen, did not impede his way to the primacy. His independence, however, when there, offended the Queen, and led to Grindal's suspension. Herring was a man who, with gentleness of principles, possessed indomitable bravery. He stirred up the north against the Pretender, and appeared in arms, like the fighting bishops of older times.



[EARNSHAW'S ADMIRATION.]

SOMETIMES SAPPHIRE SOMETIMES PALE.

By J. R. LITTLEPAGE.

CHAPTER VII.

What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
Invites my steps and points to yonder glade?
'Tis she,—but why that bleeding bosom gored,
Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?
Oh, ever beautiful! ever friendly! tell,
Is it in heaven a crime to love too well? Pope.

EARNSHAW turned round slowly from the window, through which he had been looking out upon the picturesque and noble park of Dungarvon, and when the beautiful heiress approached him, he made her a profound inclination of the head. Her beauty, dazzled him, in spite of the resolutions he had made not to suffer himself to become a dupe to his warm imagination and susceptible heart. "What a vision of loveliness," said the young man to himself, "but how self-possessed, how haughty! What a proud dame, with sweeping skirt, and head held high!" and the pride of Earnshaw awoke, while he contemplated the *hauteur* of Miss Lamotte, the pride of a man of learning and genius, gifted by God, feeling himself equal in His sight with the pampered child of splendour and fortune, who so coldly desired him to be seated. "He has a noble head," said the heiress to herself. "He resembles a painting, I have somewhere seen, of King Arthur in his youth, the knightly king whom Tennyson has idealised, or perhaps created. What speaking dark eyes, clearly chiselled features! What a grand brow; and the mouth at once so proud, firm, and sweet! What a pity he is only my cousin's tutor; probably the son of some bookseller, established abroad, who has given his son a foreign education. Ah, well, he seems to unite English strength and manliness with the Continental polish: positively a charming young man if he were only a gentleman." This was the spirit in which these two young people met.

"Mr. Earnshaw, I believe," said Cathleen.

Earnshaw bowed again.

"I am Miss Lamotte," said Cathleen, in a condescending tone.

Again the tutor bowed.

"Pray be seated," said the heiress, pointing to a chair at some distance from her own.

Percy Earnshaw seated himself. A slight colour mounted into the young man's clear brown cheek. He felt, for a moment, out of place in the presence of this haughty beauty.

"Did you ride here from St. Edmunds?" asked Cathleen.

"I walked, Miss Lamotte."

"My grandfather desired me to say, that he will send for your luggage to the station at Upfield this afternoon."

"A million thanks! but I carried it myself," said the young man, with a certain kind of humility.

Cathleen did not curl her beautiful lip in scorn, but she said with a slight laugh, "You must be endowed with the strength of some fabled knight of romance, Mr. Earnshaw."

"Not at all, mademoiselle, my luggage is light—one valise and a carpet bag."

"You travel tourist fashion," returned the heiress, lightly, "but I feel convinced you must be hungry after a walk of seven miles." She rang the bell as she spoke. "Order luncheon in the dining-room, immediately," said she, to the servant who entered. "You will find my cousin a schoolboy, Mr. Earnshaw," observed Miss Lamotte, when she was again alone with the tutor. "He is idle, greedy, spoiled, cruel to animals, cowardly."

"You give him a terrible character, mademoiselle."

"Not worse than he deserves. He is the plague of the house when he is here, and mamma indulges him so that nobody dares to contradict him—I don't envy you your task; for if you give him his way, my mother will say you have no control over him, that you have not the faculty of winning the respect of your pupils; while, if you attempt to make him study, and compel him to attend to his duties, she will say you are a tyrant, that you try to coerce instead of leading."

Earnshaw only smiled brightly at this dark picture, which the heiress drew, of his future trials.

"In every situation in life there are difficulties," said the young man, "the honest way is to meet them boldly, seeking first to do our duty and leaving the rest to providence."

The heiress laughed, half mockingly, half kindly, but wholly musical and charming.

"I see, Mr. Earnshaw, that you are one who goes in for the goods, graces, and virtues; quite unlike myself; I am a fast, light-minded, chattering, young woman, who does not pretend to be very good, and doesn't much believe in other persons who do pretend it."

Earnshaw looked at her sadly. To the young man's earnest nature there was something painful in the idea that the beautiful heiress, with her gracious presence and sweet, ringing voice, spent all her time in light mockery; laughed at the world, and the solemn things of life, as they passed before her.

"I fancy your luncheon is ready now," said dark-eyed Cathleen, rising, and leading the way towards the dining-room.

Earnshaw was not dazzled by the condescension and familiarity of the young lady of Dungarvon. He understood, or believed that he did, her light, changeable, and most capricious nature—he saw that to-morrow, next day, next week, she would think fit to pass him, with a slight contemptuous nod, a half-uttered greeting; that the memory of the smiles she dealt him so very lavishly to-day, however he might dwell upon it, would pass from her recollection, and from her soul, as the early dew passes from the glowing petals of the June rose. And yet, while he thought all this, knew it, understood it, believed it, yet he fell hopelessly, and at once, a prey to the fascination of the graceful dark-eyed girl; every flash of her wit, every gentle tone of her voice excited his rapturous admiration, or fell like a sweet-sounding bell, upon his ear and vibrated in the depths of his heart.

The grave, brave, wise, and handsome young tutor was already deeply in love with the dashing, sparkling, careless, and proud heiress of Dungarvon. She was very kind to him while they sat at luncheon. The repast was of the richest kind, and she entreated him to eat with good appetite, and do justice to the viands spread before him. When the meal was over, Miss Lamotte rose to her feet, and made a slight gesture, as if of weariness, which was not lost upon Earnshaw.

"I hate being in the house all day," she said. "Now I have a great desire for a trot on horseback over the moor. Can you ride, Mr. Earnshaw?"

The young man looked and coloured, while he answered:

"Yes, certainly, Miss Lamotte."

"That's capital," said the heiress. "You shall come with me for a scamper, will you? I don't want the man-servant if I ride with a gentleman."

Percy's heart beat. She was, then, making an equal of him at once.

"Sweet, intoxicating, but false dream!" said the young man in his own heart.

He replied, very gravely:

"You design to do me too much honour, Miss Lamotte."

There was something in his tone which abashed the proud, dashing belle, and arrested the light words which had been ready to come from her beautiful lips.

"Too much honour," she said, with a half-frown. "Pray, what meaning does Mr. Earnshaw wish to convey to Miss Lamotte by those words?"

"Mr. Earnshaw to Miss Lamotte." What a wide gulf separated those two names, and this lady would fain show me that so wide is the gulf, that it can never be spanned by such circumstances as a ride through the country together, a familiar chat, none of the every-day intimacies of social life. 'Mr. Earnshaw and Miss Lamotte!'"

It was as though she had said:

"Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales and Mr. Avernly, the poor curate." "The goddess Diana and the shepherd lad."

"I am altogether and most completely at your service, mademoiselle," said the poor tutor, proudly, "but I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the honour you proposed for me."

Cathleen Lamotte turned her black, flashing eyes upon Earnshaw with a perplexed and peculiar knitting of her brows. Who was this penniless dependent, with his dignity, his manly humility, his intellectual superiority? He was humble, but not in the least cringing. While he bent before her, as Miss Lamotte of Dungarvon, he did not forget to stand erect the next moment, as Percy Earnshaw, her cousin's tutor.

"I don't think I am doing you any very wonderful honour," said the heiress, with a frankness which became her charmingly. "It's a windy day, the lanes are muddy, it may rain, and I ask you to leave the weather, to accompany me, as so to be near at hand should my horse stumble. If I went with the man-servant I should not talk to him, not converse, that is; but you can tell me of books and pictures, of musical performers, and choice foreign *morceaux*, which have not come to England yet. You can give me a lively account of foreign life and manners, and you can amuse me in a dozen ways; therefore, you will oblige me if you will ride with me. Will you come?"

"Miss Lamotte has only to command," replied Earnshaw, making a profound obeisance.

Cathleen left the room to give orders respecting the horses. Earnshaw also retired to equip himself in riding gear. When he again saw Miss Lamotte she was mounted on a splendid chestnut horse, whose arching neck, slender limbs, and perfect action would have been the admiration of Rotten Row. The heiress wore a dark green riding-habit, a cap of green velvet with a band of ermine, and a plume of black feathers. It was a rather unique and singular riding costume, but Cathleen's taste was perfect, and she could not have chosen a toilette to set off her sparkling beauty more splendidly. Earnshaw, for his part, was accommodated with a fine black hunter from the stud of Dungarvon. He sat his horse with an admirable grace, lightness, and concealed strength. A noble young pair, in appearance, wore the dashing heiress and the grave young tutor, as they galloped off together.

"You ride like one who has been used to ride to hounds since he was twelve years old," said the heiress, at length.

"My guardian, Mr. Gollon, had me taught riding from an early age, although I was educated in Germany; where the art is not so much cultivated."

"Your guardian, Mr. Gollon, is grandpapa's solicitor, I believe?" said Cathleen.

"Yes! mademoiselle."

"He spoke of you in the most rapturous terms," said Cathleen, with a sassy laugh, and she struck her whip through the air, which made the black hunter of Earnshaw start.

"It is well to have friends speak well of one, in moderation," said Earnshaw.

"I would not give a fig for moderation," said the heiress, "let us have praise or blame, hot or cold, sweet or bitter. I like everything in extremes."

She spoke as she often did, without meaning what she said. She was now in a light, mocking mood, the mood Earnshaw the least liked to see her in.

"This is a splendid country," he said, by way of turning the conversation from himself.

"Admirable; the woods are so gorgeous, quite regal, at this time of the year, in their autumn colourings. Have you ever heard of Dungarvon Ruins, Mr. Earnshaw?"

"No! mademoiselle."

"They lie five miles from here," said the heiress, in a thoughtful tone, "and the path is through those dark woods there, in front of us, and by the side of a large piece of water called the 'silent pool.' She dropped her voice, and her cheek paled a little.

"Do you know they say the pool is haunted by the Evil One, that he sits under some of the great trees and flings stones into the water. Beyond the pool are the ruins of old Dungarvon, the seat of our forefathers in the times of the monks. The old place was destroyed by Cromwell's soldiers; but the ruins are glorious, grand, solemn, and so solitary."

"And haunted, mademoiselle?" asked the young man, with a smile.

"Ah, you laugh—you are a sceptic," said Miss Lamotte, gravely.

"And are not you, mademoiselle?" asked Earnshaw, in amazement.

The young lady shook her head, gravely.

"It is almost the only subject," she said, "which I object to joke about. I never laughed at a ghost tale in my life."

She looked exquisitely beautiful in her pensive mood, her head a little lowered, her eyes thoughtful, her cheek pale.

Earnshaw, contemplating her loveliness, at that moment felt his whole nature more deeply stirred within him, than it had been by the sparkling vivacity of the country beauty in her brighter moods.

"And you say that this ruin is haunted, mademoiselle?" asked Earnshaw, in a voice which newly awakened passion and admiring tenderness rendered tremulous in spite of himself.

"It is held in awe by the country folks, Mr. Earnshaw," said Cathleen, in a low tone. "Strange rumours are afloat regarding that spot where the magnificent castle of the Dungarvons stood in the days of old. You must know," she added, turning gravely towards Percy Earnshaw, "that grandpapa is only a branch—rather a distant one—of the Dungarvon line; heirs failed, there was no Dungarvon left to take to the title, and thus it came about that my grandfather was installed as the possessor of the entailed property; but the title could not be given, according to some old law connected with the heraldry of our race. So that grandpapa remains simply Squire Lamotte. Papa died while I lay in my cradle; but rumour says that the spirits of the departed Dungarvons rest not while an alien branch of the family usurps the lands and fortunes. Grandpapa, naturally, is very anxious that I should never hear or listen to these rumours."

"He knows well that they have a tendency to excite the imagination and alarm the nervous sensibilities of a nature highly-organised like yours, mademoiselle," said Earnshaw, in a low voice.

"And yet, with it all, the subject has a most wonderful fascination for me," said the young heiress, dreamily. "They say, Mr. Earnshaw, that on certain nights in the year, on Hallowe'en, for instance, if one should go and sit among those ruins when the wind is sighing, the leaves are falling, and the moon is sailing, almost stealthily, as it were, along her glory-path in the heavens—they say, that all at once, at midnight, bells strike out a joyous peal from the old clock-tower, and ring as though for a wedding; and yet, you must know, that the bells were destroyed in that same old clock-tower years and years ago, and the peals which strike out so merrily are no natural sounds, but a weird and wonderful clamour of spirit music. They say that if one should sit up in one's bed on Hallowe'en, at twelve o'clock at night, and listen, eagerly and anxiously, one would hear those wedding peals, if one's home were within fifteen miles of Dungarvon. But that is not all," added the romantic and fanciful young heiress, dropping her voice to a lower key. "It is said that if you should go to the ruins on that night, alone, and sit amongst them, that not only shall the watcher hear the sound of the bells, but the whole building will start up again into perfect form, as it stood in the days of Queen Bess. Lordly *façade* and gothic porch will start up, and stones shall knit together, forming, at once, the noble castle which was the pride of the county some three hundred years ago. There are terraced gardens, quaint and stately, which take the place of the wild, heath-covered space which now surrounds the ruins; and forth from the great front entrance troop a gay assemblage of knights and dames, clad in the bright, costly, and picturesque fashions of olden time. There are cavaliers on prancing steeds, dames with jewels in their ears, and hawks upon their hands, pages in silver doublet and scarlet hose; and this gay cavalcade forms into line of procession, and troops off towards St. Edmunds, to the sound of the bells, for nuptials are about to be celebrated between a daughter of the house of Dungarvon and a princely knight of Spain. The cavalcade troop off, and the watcher is left sitting among the splendours of the gothic castle."

"And what beides him afterwards?" asked Earnshaw, gaily, of the beautiful heiress.

"The remainder of the story is very sad," replied Cathleen, mournfully. "It seems that the Lady Ada, she, the earl's daughter, who had wedded the courtly Spanish knight to please her stern father, had given all her love to a humble English squire, whose only recommendations were his noble person, his rarely-gifted mind, his true, brave, generous heart, and the Lady Ada had secretly wedded him some twelve months before, and more than having wedded him," added the lovely heiress, with a bright blush, though looking with frank innocence, meanwhile, into the eyes of Earnshaw, "their union had

been blessed by the birth of a son, who was the rightful heir-expectant to Dungarvon Towers, since Ada was the sole heiress of the old earl. Well, Mr. Earnshaw, the weak and cowardly girl was wedded at St. Edmund's church to the cruel Spanish noble; while her heart was breaking and she was wishing for death."

"And where was the English squire all the while?" asked Earnshaw, in a low, deep tone of interest.

"He was fighting in Ireland," replied the heiress, "he was attached to the person of the brave unfortunate, Earl of Essex. Meanwhile, Lady Ada, became the bride of another man, and returned in pomp to the castle. The wedding took place on the morning of the last day of October; the eve which follows, is the eve of All Hallow's. On that very evening, the newly-made bride, stole secretly out of a postern-door in the castle; a large hood was on her head, a veil over her face; she took the road towards a deep wood, in the very heart of which stood a wood-cutter's cottage. In that cottage her babe was at nurse, under the care of the peasant's wife. Lady Ada reached her destination, as she thought, unobserved; but there was among her handmaidens one Spanish girl, to whom the Spanish knight had formerly professed love; this creature was jealous of the Lady of Dungarvon, and resolved to destroy her; she followed at a distance, saw her enter the cottage of the wood-cutter, crept stealthily on tiptoe, and looked in at the window. She then beheld the Lady Ada kneeling down, and beating her breast, over the cradle of a lovely sleeping child, and she heard her passionate utterances. Thereupon, the snake glided back to the castle, sought out the bridegroom, told him what she had seen, and invited him to follow her to the wood. The Spaniard came, he, too, looked through the window, and watched the passionate caresses, which his bride of a few hours, lavished upon a smiling, rosy cherub. Then he suddenly entered the cottage, and stood, with a dreadful smile upon his lip, before the Lady Ada. 'Is that your child, lady?' he asked, giving his moustache a savage pull, and smiling horribly upon the young mother. 'It is, it is,' she shrieked out, in her affright; for he made a long stride towards the tiny cradle. 'It is mine,' she said, trying to beat him back with her fair, jewelled hands. Can you guess what happened? The wretch, still smiling, lifted the child from the cradle, and dashed its head against the rude wall. Then he laid it, dead, on the floor, at its wretched mother's feet."

"Ah, you turn pale at a tale like that, Mr. Earnshaw. You don't scoff, and joke about it, as would most fashionable young gentlemen, who, however much they would thrill with horror were such a tragedy enacted under their eyes, would fail to see the awfulness of a crime committed three hundred years ago: such people have no imagination, Mr. Earnshaw, no sympathy. For them, the past is one huge unreal fable, abounding in impossibilities, and false echoes; a dim epoch, lost in the mists of time; but you and I, we feel the dread of a story, like that I have just related, pervading the nineteenth century atmosphere. While we wander in those ancient woods, and recall the time when our ancestors trod this ground, the real, living, hilarious, busy, eager, noisy people of that day, while we lay hidden in the darkness of the mysterious future, I do like one who can turn pale at a history of past sin or sorrow, and whose eyes can glisten at a tale of bygone heroism, self-devotion, or tender affection."

The heiress looked divine, in the eyes of Earnshaw, while she spoke thus earnestly; there was a glow upon her cheek, an eloquence in the language of her eyes, that idealised her into something more than mortal.

"And what became of the Lady Ada, Miss Lamotte?" asked the tutor, gravely.

"She looked once at her dead child, then once at his murderer, and for a space she did not speak. At length she said: 'What am I to do now?' 'Do?' echoed the Spaniard, 'you must come back to the castle, and live as my wife, in all outward honour. I am satisfied with the revenge I have taken. I mean to grasp your present dower, and to inherit your lands after you, or rather to share them with you. No word of your disgrace shall pass my lips.' 'Be it so!' replied Ada, and, casting one more look upon the dead child, she made a mute gesture of farewell. She returned then to the hall of the castle, and danced a measure with her bridegroom, before all the guests; she sat by his side at the board, and pledged him in the bright red wine; and then she went up into the bridal chamber, to await the coming of her new lord. It was a high chamber; there was a stone terrace below—often, on moonlit nights, had the Lady Ada sat at that window, to give pleasure to her humbly-born, though nobly-gifted husband, whose dark figure she had watched stealing among the shrubs and fruit trees of the garden below. Can you guess what wretched Ada did? She

leaned far out of the casement, and uttered an exceeding bitter cry. It was her death-wail. She sprang down, leaped into the grim arms of the last enemy, on her bridal night. The fate of Jezebel was the refuge of the weak but loving daughter of the house of Dungarvon."

"It is a thrilling story," said Earnshaw.

"But I have not told you all," said the heiress. "It is said that the watcher on the eve of Allhallow's shall not only see the gay cavalcade depart, but shall behold its return, and shall see the lights flash in the windows and hear the sound of music and revelry; and then, all at once, the cry, the piercing shriek of Lady Ada sounds from the high turret window, afterwards a heavy thud upon the stones, next a death-like stillness; and, behold, the place will again have crumbled into ruins."

"But surely, Miss Lamotte," said Earnshaw, timidly "you place no credence in these tales of the country folks?"

She laughed and lowered her head. "I am a superstitious damsel, I am afraid, Mr. Earnshaw. At least I am an imaginative one, and I am fearful of being alone in darkness," she shuddered as she spoke. "But I do not quite believe all the supernatural portions of the tale I have told you. We are now within ten minutes' ride of the ruins, would you like to see them?"

"Certainly I should," replied the tutor.

When, after riding through a close woodland path, Earnshaw found himself among the ruins of Dungarvon, he uttered an exclamation of delight. "What a solitude!" he said, rapturously. "What grand gray walls—how stern and grim. How proud, even in their decay, and how stately. Oh! I must come and sketch that magnificent archway; and what a glorious growth of ivy! Do you object, Miss Lamotte, to permitting me to assist you to alight; and shall we explore these wondrous vestiges of the past?"

Cathleen at once consented; the horses were left quietly to graze at will on the rank herbage which grew among the rough and scattered fragments of stone; Earnshaw timidly offered his arm to the heiress.

"No!" she said, with a sprightly air, which discomfited the young man, after her late mood of sentiment, pity, and gentleness. "No! I am an independent damsel, I can explore ruins without the aid of mortal arm; and, with a light laugh, she tripped out of sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

He was a gentleman
On whom I built an absolute trust.
The sin of my ingratitude, even now,
Was heavy on me.

Macbeth.

INSTEAD of riding towards the quiet vicarage house in the village of St. Edmonds, Mr. Oscar Arkwright turned his horse's head in the direction of the Stone House, that desolate and dilapidated house on the moorland, where dwelt old Grey, the grandfather of Kate.

"I know that rough and brutal uncle Josh will have left by the time I arrive at the Stone House," soliloquised the young man; "he is obliged to be attending to his mill and his farm by this time in the morning, so that I shall find the old man alone. I will send Madam Kate out of sight and hearing."

Then Oscar urged his horse forward, and half-an-hour's sharp riding brought him over the moor, to the lane where the Stone House stood. A few yards farther, and he alighted before the broken gate, pushed it open, and led his horse across the weed-grown gravel path. Seen in the bright light of the autumn sunshine, the house and grounds looked desolate and dreary, as they did in the twilight gloom and chilling rain of the previous night. All the ugly features of the dwelling and its surroundings were flung up into vivid relief. The windows were stuffed with rags; the sly and sinister look which that unseemly arrangement gave to the face of the house it would be difficult to describe. It almost seemed as if the tumble-down old place were winking at you. The paint was completely off the front door; the pillars of the little portico were broken; a small gate in the rear, led into a thickly-planted fruit garden, where the trees were unpruned, and grew too closely together to produce much fruit; a solitary hen was picking up what she could find among the weeds about the door step. The air of silence, penury, and loneliness which the whole place presented struck upon the senses of Oscar Arkwright, and made him shudder slightly.

"Horrible old place," said the young man to himself; "who would fancy that this house held the clue to my future fortune, and the secret by means of which I shall gain that haughty Cathleen as my wife. Ugh! how I hate this house, and the memories connected with it. When I came here first, I thought

of money from Lamotte. Money, money, heaps of sovereigns, rolls of bank-notes, title-deeds to snug little farms. I used to dream every night of a cellar under the vicarage, where I had hidden the wealth which the wicked squire would give me to keep his dreadful secret, and then I felt in love with this pale-faced Kate—and—brought myself into the most absurd difficulty, that ever hampered a man of wit and daring."

He frowned as he spoke, and the evil light in his eyes burnt pale.

At that moment a step sounded on the pathway, and Kate appeared in sight—a joyful gleam shone in her gray eyes when she saw Oscar.

"Ah, Oscar," she said, "I thought—I thought you would not be unkind, I knew you would come again soon."

"How dreadfully shabby you look," replied Oscar, with a sullen smile.

He was contrasting Kate's washed-out print, which looked chilly for the late autumn, with the long, graceful gray robe of Cathleen, the heiress.

"You are unkind, Oscar," said poor Kate; her lip trembled, and a tear started to her eye. "You know grandfather will never part with his money to buy me clothes, and so I must wear what I have, and—"

"There, there, don't make a fuss about it," said the ungracious young gentleman. "Will somebody come and hold my horse for a time. I have business with Mr. Grey."

"Oh, Oscar, are you going to tell him—is it anything about me, about us? Tell me."

And a delicate flush stole up into the thin pale cheek of Kate Grey.

"About us," echoed Oscar, with intense scorn. "What do you take me to be, I should like to know? Pray have you forgotten all I told you last night, madam? I think you want a little plainer speaking to, Kate Grey—I do, upon my honour."

She covered her eyes with her hands, and sobbed.

"I suppose I must trust to Fate to look after my unfortunate horse," said the rector's nephew, with a laugh. "Here I will put his bridle over this branch of the apple-tree. Now, please can I see your grandfather?"

She looked at the handsome man who had won her young heart, and now was slowly breaking it, with a sort of sad amazement. Could this cruel, graceful man be the devoted, despairing lover of twelve months back? Was she dreaming? or had some evil spell come over Oscar? Was he acting under an influence foreign to his own nature?

"Can I see your grandfather?" asked Mr. Oscar Arkwright, speaking impatiently.

"Yes, yes, I suppose so," answered Kate, speaking like one in a dream.

And she opened the hall-door with a key, which she produced, and then led Oscar across the uncovered passage, and up the broken staircase. A few more steps brought the pair to the door of old Grey's chamber.

Kate entered first.

"Are you comfortable, grandfather?"

"Yes, yes; it's daylight now; the sun shines. I'm always pretty comfortable when it's sunlight. They never come in the sun, those figures."

"It's young Mr. Arkwright, grandfather, who wishes to speak to you."

"Yes, yes; send him in."

Arkwright entered without ceremony.

"How are you to-day, Mr. Grey?" said the young gentleman, approaching the queer old arm-chair where grandfather Grey sat, propped up with pillows, as he had sat the previous night. A cup of strong tea, an egg, and a muffin were by the side of the old man. He wore a long flannel gown down to his feet, and a close black skull-cap upon his head.

"You see, I've my breakfast, oh, yes, I've my breakfast!" said Mr. Grey, nodding, smiling, and shaking hands heartily with the rector's nephew, "and you should have some, too, but eggs are expensive. How much a-piece, Kate?"

"Three halfpence, sir," responded Kate, gravely.

"Ah, yes, look at that," cried the invalid, triumphantly. "I said eggs were expensive. Sit down—sit down, close to the fire."

Oscar immediately did as he was bidden. With a pardonable curiosity, Kate lingered in the room. Oscar glanced impatiently, almost savagely at her.

"I have most particular business to consult Mr. Grey about, Miss Kate," he said, politely. "Would you mind leaving us alone?"

"Aye, get along, get along. Little girls mustn't hear everything," said the old man, who often treated Kate as a little child.

The poor girl withdrew, and Oscar was alone with the old man.

"Now, Mr. Grey," began Oscar, hurriedly, "I am come about the old business."

"What old business?" asked the invalid, with a cunning, but timid look on his white, sharp face.

"Now, now, Mr. Grey, it's no use to feign with me," said the rector's nephew, bending down his head, pitiless, but handsome countenance, close to that of the old man. "You have often talked with me, often come to the conclusion, that it was better, much better to be open with one who knows so very much of the affair, as I do. You have confided to me a great deal. I know the tale of the glove dropped into the silent pool, and the Evil One sitting under the tree, the voices in the chimneys and in the winds. I wish for no old stories; but tell me plain and straight, who killed Henry Dungarvon, and how was it done?"

"If I told that," cried the old man, with a feeble shriek of terror, "they'd hang me up as high as Haman, next Upheld assizes. They would Mr. Arkwright, sir, they would."

The poor old man trembled from head to foot; his helpless face was enough to move the pity of a very stoic, but Oscar was more unfeeling.

"They will never hang you, my dear Mr. Grey, if you tell me the truth," said the rector's nephew, with a cold smile, "but if you won't tell me, why I shall be under the necessity, I fear, of consulting a magistrate at Upheld, and then you see—"

The old man clutched the arm of the young one with the iron grasp of fear and entreaty.

"I'll tell, I'll tell," he said. "I'll tell all—it's twenty years ago—but mind, I never laid hand on the poor, dear, young lord, not I, not I, not I, no—I always fling that at them, when they come in the night, with their old tales and cruel voices."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Oscar, very impatiently. "I don't want any more tales about voices; say quickly, who killed the young lord?"

"I'll tell you how it all happened, if you'll only give me time," said Grandfather Grey, hysterically, "but, but, if you hurry me on, I forget."

"I ask you the name," thundered Oscar, giving way to a burst of rage, "the name of the murderer."

A blank look came over the old man's face, and he shut his lips tightly. He looked like a statue cut in faded marble, a statue of a lean, rigid, stirless old man, with deep wrinkles on his forehead, and under his eyes. It was useless to threaten or coerce that silent figure. Oscar shook Mr. Grey gently by the arm.

"Look, how the sun is shining, Mr. Grey. What a lovely morning for late October."

Then the old man smiled feebly, and his memory came back to him.

"You were going to tell me how it happened, you know," said Oscar.

"I was up there, that day," said the old man, speaking now like one in a dream. "I was up at the Towers, and the old earl was gone a hunting, and up comes Lord Harry to me, and says he, 'Jem Grey, you must come out shooting wild ducks on the moors at the back, beyond Glenlyde, and it's a fine open day for December,' he says; that was two days before Christmas. I got all my things ready, and I started with my young lord. We had a boy with us, called Bob. He was the son of a dead gamekeeper, his widowed mother was a pensioner of my lord's, and lived in a small cottage near the mill, which my son, Josh, now occupies; that cottage has been taken down. We went on horseback, all of us. I was head gamekeeper then at the Towers, and a fine, strong fellow, though you would not believe it to see me now, and I rode close behind my young Lord Henry, and I remember thinking what a fine-made man he was, and how well he sat his horse, and what a brave, jovial, kind young noble he always was. Good to me, good to my missus, good to Josh, who was then a clumsy lad of twenty, or so, employed under the miller, at the farm and mill, where he is now master. We were poor then," said the old man, clasping his hands. "We were not thought of much account, and I suppose we were a little discontented, like the most of the world. Ah, what pain and sin that same discontent led to!"

There was a pause here in the narrative, and Oscar grew impatient.

"I don't want to have a sermon on discontent, my good sir," he said. "I can hear that from my uncle, in the pulpit, most Sundays in the year, but I want to know what came of Lord Dungarvon's shooting expedition."

"He was called Lord Dungarvon by us country people, which was not right, seeing his father was Earl Dungarvon, and the family name was Heathcote; but we never called him Lord Heathcote, always Lord Dungarvon, for the place is called Dungarvon, and—"

"Hush, hush," interrupted Oscar, "can't you understand that I am in a hurry to get to the end of your tale?"

"We went in," said the old man, speaking now in a rapid whisper. "We went in and we came to the moors, and we bagged a load of game. Night came

en. Mr. Oscar, before we thought of returning. We had left our horses at the market town, Upfield, two miles off. We walked back there, and carried the game. My lord took his share, and he went to the 'Wheatshaf,' the chief inn, where our horses were stabled, but there was such an uproar in the house, it being near Christmas, such a lot of farmers drinking in the long room, and crowding about the bar, that my lord said, 'Let us go to the 'Raven,' that quiet old inn, and have a little dinner, for I am starved.' The landlady was in great anxiety when my lord walked out of her house, because of the noise in it, and she scolded some of her guests, telling them that it was their impertinent curiosity in crowding and staring which had driven my lord off. Well, we found the 'Raven' a queer, quiet, ancient inn. You go down three steps under a carved porch, and the ceiling of the bar is so low you can touch it with your hand, it's dark oak, and carved all over with figures of saints and angels—once the 'Raven' was a religious house. The landlady came and curtsied, and 'What shall I serve you with, my lord,' she says. 'Roast ducks, some of those I see at the fire in your great kitchen, Mrs. Lemon,' said my lord, 'serve it up quickly, with some good Christmas ale in the silver flagon which your husband won long ago at the steeple chase. And give my two men everything they ask for, down here.'

"He goes up, and he dines. We stay down, and we dine. Then comes on a storm, thunder, and lightning, though it was winter time, and my lord ordered a bed. I was to go up and assist him; but first I went out into the town to buy toilet requisites, for we had nothing with us in the way of brushes, soaps and so on; those things which refined people can't do without. When I came in again they told me a gentleman was with my lord. I went up all the same. I knocked and went in. The gentleman was sitting before the fire with my lord; a table was between them—they were playing cards—oh, heaven forgive me! cards. I did not know the gentleman then."

"But you know now," said Oscar. "Tell me, who was that man?"

"It was not the one you fancy," cried the old man, with a cunning leer.

"Unless you tell me all that followed, I will hang you higher than Haman!" cried Oscar.

"Wait, wait; I'll tell you in two minutes!" said the old man.

(To be continued.)

FLORIAN.

CHAPTER XX.

TREMBLING like an aspen, and pale and flushed by turns, Electa clasped her hands, and begged to be taken to her mother. After all these weary years the thought of pillowing her head upon the bosom of a mother whom she could love, overpowered her to such an extent that reason seemed for the time to have left her.

"When shall I see my mother? Oh, let it not be long."

At this point Corinna spoke. Thus far she had been strangely occupied with her own reflections; but now she looked up with an expression that commanded attention.

"Electa, if my testimony were needed to assure you that the lady Camilla is your mother, I could give it; but it is not. I have never known your mother's name until now; but I have known so much that I can vouch for the truth of the story Orlando has told, and for the truth of the conclusion you have drawn from it. But, my child, you must not see your mother yet. Heaven hath placed in our hands the means of saving Florian, and to that end each must do her part; and Orlando must do his. If Florian can be kept from the hands of the executioner for two weeks, I will save him if I live. And this can only be done by keeping the lady Camilla in suspense."

"Oh, Corinna! how can you say that?" cried Electa.

"Good woman," added Orlando, reproachfully, "you do not know Camilla if you think she could not be trusted in such a matter."

"I know human nature," returned the woman, with a touch of sternness in her manner. "Now mark me: The lady at first shrank from asking a favour at the ambassador's hands; and hence, knowing the cause of her hesitation, we may judge that it is painful for her to feel indebted to him. You know that the king is eager to put Florian to death, and so is Claudius, and the moment the restraint is withdrawn they will do so. So all depends upon Camilla's influence over the ambassador. I simply state the facts, and you can judge for yourselves—both of you. I must go to Italy—to Naples, and perhaps beyond.

I will return within ~~two~~ weeks; and if Florian be alive then, I will save him from the hands of his enemies."

"But—Corinna—what evidence have we of this?" asked Orlando.

"You have my solemn assurance," she replied. "What object could I have in deceiving you?"

Orlando turned to Electa, and asked her what she would do.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "if I never see my mother, let Florian be saved. He is all in all to me. With Florian lost, even a mother's love could not bring to me peace and happiness. Corinna does not speak lightly. Let it be as she says."

"Bless you!" ejaculated the stewardess, imprinting a kiss upon Electa's brow; and then turning to Orlando she continued: "And now, sir, I would be on my way at once. Let me save Florian, and see my Electa happy, and my work on earth will be accomplished!"

"There is a vessel bound for Rome to sail this very day," said the host.

"Then in that vessel I will go. Will you secure me a passage in it?"

Orlando lost no time; and it was well he did not, for when he reached the quay he found the vessel in question already being prepared for sea; but at his earnest entreaty the captain promised to wait for the new passenger. So Orlando made haste back to his house, and very shortly Corinna was ready to accompany him.

"Oh! Corinna, you will not fall!" begged Electa, holding her friend by both hands.

"Electa, if you will do your part, I will do mine. Save Florian for two weeks, and I will deliver him from the hands of his enemies."

In an hour from that time the vessel had set sail, and Corinna was on board. When Orlando returned to his house he asked Electa what wondrous power the strange woman was going to evoke.

But she could not tell. She had thought of asking him the same question. But Orlando shook his head. He had no knowledge of her intent. In fact, he feared that she was wild in her expectations. But not so the maiden.

"Corinna is a strange woman," she said, "and hath led a strange life; but she is true and upright, and I will rest upon her promise. I only fear that the evil hour may overtake us here before she can return."

But Orlando hoped not.

"I can see now that Corinna was right," he said. "The Lady Camilla must use all her influence with the ambassador. It seems hard to keep her in such cruel suspense; but we will not forget that the life of our dearest friend hangs upon the event. We will rest in hope, dear lady, and offer up our prayers to heaven!"

The days passed on, and the king became impatient. He dared not keep his prisoner much longer. Said he to the Byzantine ambassador:

"The people are beginning to express their sympathy openly; aye, at the very street corners. Men have said that if this Florian had not been betrayed into our hands he would very soon have raised a revolt that would have revolutionised the government. It seems that just before his arrest he came to the city in disguise and distributed among the poor of our people on his way large sums of money. I tell you, Claudius, I cannot spare him much longer. I must retract my edict."

"By my soul and body, sire," returned the ambassador, "I am as anxious as you are; for I have sworn that Florian should die. I will not ask you to delay much longer."

And on that day Claudius visited the widow, and frankly told her what the king had said. Camilla was heavily oppressed. She had as yet gained no tidings of her daughter, though a full week had passed. But so sure was she that her child lived, and so sure, also, that Florian could restore the lost one to her embrace, that she overcame her mighty repugnance, and once more besought the ambassador to favour her.

That very morning Orlando had called upon her, and had told her why this thing was kept from her. "It is for Florian's own sake," he had explained. "The unfortunate man hath a promise, if he can hold on upon his life yet a little while, that a power will manifest itself, sufficient to set him free from the hands of his enemies." And then he had asked her if she could believe him.

And Camilla had answered,—"No,—I blame him not; I should be a thankless woman indeed, could I refuse to do my part towards saving the life of your dear friend; to say nothing of his kindness to my child. No, Orlando, I will not blame him. I will bear up, and intercede with the ambassador while I can."

Claudius listened to the pleadings of the beautiful

widow, and again promised that Florian should live a few more days.

"But," he said, "there must be an end of this. Were the prisoner in my hands I would give you his life with pleasure, if it could add one particle to your happiness; but such is not the case. He is a prisoner of the king's, and the king will not spare him much longer."

In the meantime, Electa found a home beneath Orlando's roof, hopeful and despondent by turns. Never had woman more possibility of joy, and more possibility of ill. She might gain a mother and a lover; and be the happiest creature in existence, burdened with joy the very anticipation of which set her brain in a whirl. And she might lose that dear lover; he might be snatched away from her by the red hand of the executioner—so that even were she to find her mother, the satisfaction would be without happiness, sad and mournful.

Orlando was very kind to her, loving her as he would have loved a sister. So sternly and intrinsically honourable was he that he looked upon the maiden, from the first, as his brother's wife. Had it not been thus, he would have loved her with a far different love; for in his life he had never seen a woman so perfectly beautiful. The more he saw of her inner life the more lovely she became in his eyes; and it was fortunate for Electa's peace of mind that his passions were under control of the better man.

Athos and Dardinel ventured out only by night, for they knew that Timon and his friends were searching far and wide. They had seen Thalia, in the disguise of a nun, lurking around the house of Charon; and they knew that the banditti were putting forth every effort to find them.

At the stronghold of the mountains things were in a sad condition. Bayard was dead, and word had been received from Corinna that the poison which killed him was a potion which he had himself placed in her own cup. Some denounced the woman, and were willing to follow Timon; but by far the most of them declared for the honour of the woman's memory; and denounced Timon as a villain and a traitor. It was known that he had betrayed Florian; and the death of their chieftain had been the result of the same plot, towards the consummation of which the youthful hero had been betrayed into the hands of the enemy. But not yet had the banditti settled upon any fixed course. Had Florian been with them he would have been chosen their chieftain almost unanimously; and, knowing that he yet lived, and hoping that some kind power might set him finally free, they postponed the election of a chieftain, resolved that he should lead them if he lived to be with them again.

All the friends Timon and Thalia could count were six, and they spent most of their time looking for Electa.

Two weeks had passed since the death of Charon, and the last funeral rite had been performed. The tomb had been sealed, and the widow had been placed in the possession of the property, with full power to act for herself in all matters of business pertaining to her household and estates.

And during this time Claudius had been anxiously waiting. He came now, and offered to Camilla his hand and heart. He told her that he loved her, and he asked her to become his wife.

Camilla gazed upon him in astonishment. A little while she returned his eager, waiting look, and then she shrank away from him as she would have shrank from some poisonous thing.

"My lord, oh, spare me!"

"How?" he demanded. "Do you not love me? Will you not listen to my offer?"

"Oh, I cannot! In heaven's name let me hear no more!"

"Camilla!" the ambassador cried, advancing towards her, "you had better think a second time."

But she would not listen—she could not. She shrank still farther away, putting forth both her hands, as though to keep him from her.

Claudius regarded her for some seconds with a look in which anger and chagrin were equally manifest, and then, in low, hissing tones, he said:

"Woman, I have been deceived. You have played your part well. But I regret not the price I have paid for the bitter experience. Farewell! Claudius will trouble you no more."

His look and his tone frightened her, and before she could speak to ask his forgiveness—to beg that he would consider the unhappy situation in which she had been placed, he was gone; and she sank down, with her face buried in her hands, groaning in agony of spirit:

"Lost! lost! He is my enemy now; and he will crush my last hope of life if he can!"

"Sire," said Claudius, standing in the king's presence, "I ask no more that the course of justice be stayed. Let Florian die when you please!"

And straightway the king ordered that Florian, the condemned outlaw and robber, should be taken without the gates of the city, and there dealt with agreeably to the sentence he had already passed.

"Be sure that every atom of his body is burned to ashes," the revengeful monarch cried; "and that those ashes are scattered to the four winds of heaven, so that his remains find no resting-place in the bosom of his mother earth!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE bolts were withdrawn; the ponderous iron door swung open, and four men—three of them robed in black, and one in a garb of a blood-red hue—entered the prisoner's cell. Two of the men in black advanced, one bearing a lantern, while the other read from a parchment roll:

"Florian, called Bandit of Syracuse! Outlawed! A deserter from the king's forces, and from his post of duty! A convicted traitor! A robber of the imperial treasure! We call you to punishment!"

"Is the hour fixed?" asked the prisoner.

"Aye—this hour that now is!" replied he who had read what was written at the head of the parchment.

"We have come to conduct you to the place of execution!"

Florian had too much sense to think of asking mercy at the hands of these men, who only did what their master commanded them. For a little while he was very weak, and his limbs shook as if with the palsy; for he had entertained a hope that Corinna would secure his freedom, and this summons found him in a measure unprepared; but after a struggle he succeeded in calling his strength and composure to his aid, and with a firm step he followed his conductors from the prison. In the court they found a covered chair, in which the condemned man was to be conveyed to the place of execution; for the king had decided that it would be well not to lead him openly through the streets of the city.

While this was going on in the court, Orlando made his appearance in the vestibule, and demanded to be conducted to the cell of his friend.

"He is not there," said the gaoler. "You must look for him without the gates of the city."

"Now? Is he to die?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"He is being borne to the place of death even now."

Like one in a horrible dream, Orlando staggered forth into the open air; and while he stood upon the pavement before the vestibule, he saw the dismal procession come out from the court. He reflected a moment, and then flew to the house of Camilla, where he found his dear friend buried in grief.

"Lady—Camilla—what is it?"

"Alas, Orlando! I fear they will kill your friend. Claudius came hither to-day, and asked me to love him and be his wife; and when I shrank from him and refused him, he went away with such a look of evil intent that I feared the worst."

"And," groaned Orlando, "it hath come! I came, hoping that you might help me; but you cannot. Oh, Camilla, they are even now bearing him to his death! Detain me not! I must away."

And yet, when he reached the street, he knew not what to do. He dared not go home where Electa was; so, following the crowd, he drifted towards the place of execution. In the great square he met Athos, who asked him if he had seen Corinna.

"No," he answered. "Hath she returned?"

"Yes. A ship came in this very day; and Corinna was in it, and I saw her come up from the quay, in company with two monks."

"What sort of monks were they?"

"I don't know. Their garbs were entirely unlike those of any monks I ever saw before."

"Which way went they?"

"I thought towards the royal palace," said Athos. "Corinna saw me, but she did not stop to speak; yet I observed that her face was bright, and I judged that she was the bearer of good tidings. Let us go on, my master, and be near Florian. If Corinna hath come back armed with saving power, be sure she will use it."

Orlando moved on, with Athos by his side; but he could not feel the hope which Athos felt. He had not that trustful confidence in the strange woman's power which possessed the other. Arrived at the gate, they crowded through with the eager, excited populace; and ere long they reached the ground. It was a deep ravine, where, at some remote period, a river must have had its course. Low down in the centre of the gulf was the place of execution, where was an iron stake set firmly into the earth, and round it, heaped upon the charred and blackened turf, dry, fresh faggots were piled.

Slowly down into the grim abyss marched the men who bore the covered chair; and upon either side,

reaching far in advance and extending to the rear, were triple lines of the king's soldiers. When those who bore the chair had reached the place, they set their burden down; and presently the door was raised, and Florian was taken out, bound hand and foot.

There were such howls and dismal groans from the thousands of people assembled upon the rising banks that the soldiers gathered more closely around the victim and faced outward, with their spears levelled.

Athos and Orlando had stopped upon the summit of the bank, where they could look down into the valley upon one hand, and upon the road that led towards the city on the other. Just as the soldiers presented their spears, Athos saw two horsemen riding at full gallop towards the place, and he said at once that they came from Corinna.

"They will be too late," cried Orlando, in despair. "See, the executioner hath already uncovered his axe, and the death-block is in its place!"

Then Athos, in full confidence that he had not read the expression upon Corinna's face wrongfully, leaped down into the pit, making his way through the crowd, heedless of whom he overturned.

Down in the dark depths of the Gehenna, the priest had said his prayers, and stout men had seized the prisoner and cast him upon the block.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd, and the soldiers saw a man coming like the wind—his hair streaming, and his face wild like a maniac's; and, half-frightened by his strange manner, they suffered him to dash their spears aside and leap into the open space where the executioners were.

"Hold! In heaven's name! in the king's name, hold!"

The officers looked upon the man in mute astonishment; and the executioners hesitated in their work.

"I am in advance of the messenger," exclaimed Athos, "and I bid you wait his coming. Ha! see, there he comes! He is from the king. Strike not a blow, for your lives! Strike, and you die, every one!"

Away at the far end of the valley were seen two horsemen approaching swiftly, and those who stood in their track made way for them; and as they came near, their horses quivering at every point, and dashing the foamy sweat right and left, the people recognised Glancus, the king's prime-minister, and the centurion Zerbino.

"What ho!" shouted Glancus. "Is Florian safe?"

"He is yet alive and unharmed."

"Then let him live, and conduct him in safety to the house of the Lieutenant Orlando! Such are the king's orders; and here is the royal signal."

Like the voice of mighty thunder arose the shouts of joy and gladness from the people; and the officers of the king, when they heard it, said, one to the other:

"It might have been a dangerous thing for the throne of Vestales had this youth been slain."

Athos grasped the hand of Florian and kissed it, and then hastened up and rejoined Orlando.

"Come, my master," he said. "Let us make haste back, and be there when Florian arrives."

"But—ye gods! Will he come?" queried Orlando in a half-stupified manner.

"Certainly he will come. Did you not hear the prime minister?"

"Yes—I heard."

"Then you know that Corinna hath done her work. Come—we must hasten, for I would not that Florian should reach your home ahead of us."

In the house of Orlando were gathered those who had found a home there during the past two weeks, and with them was Corinna. As yet the woman had told nothing save that she had done her work. She would tell her story to Florian alone, and he might tell it to whom he pleased. Orlando had not yet awakened from his dream. Very often he started up and gazed about him, as though he would assure himself that he was awake.

Electa knew not yet to what a fearful situation her lover had been brought. She only knew that the saving power had come, and that he would be free. She could not speak; she hardly dared to breathe; but she sat with her hands clasped upon her bosom, like one who cometh up from the gulf of dark despair, not yet used to the full light of joyous day.

But not long so—no, not long.

By-and-bye came the sound of a tumult in the street, and many voices were heard in loud acclaim. Orlando arose and went forth, and before his house he beheld a vast multitude, the officers having stopped at his door with their charge.

"Orlando," said the centurion Zerbino, "by the king's orders I deliver Florian into your hands. He is free, and may go from hence whithersoever he pleases."

The two friends were clasped in a warm embrace,

after which Florian turned and addressed the people.

"My countrymen," he said, "I beg that you will not detain me now. I am weary and weak with long suffering. Permit me now to rest, and if, in the future, I can serve you, you may command me. Heaven bless you each and all, and may the holy saints intercede for you always!"

There were enough wise ones in the throng to command the attention of the ignorant and thoughtless; and with more shouts of satisfaction the multitude dispersed.

Then Florian went into the house, where his friends greeted him as one raised from the dead. Electa was the last, and as he strained her to his bosom he forgot that earth had any suffering for her children.

"Electa!—my life! my love! Oh, this is joy!"

And the happy maiden, looking up through her tears, could only murmur his name, and pillow her head against his throbbing heart.

By-and-bye, when the first wild thrill of happiness had settled down into a state of tranquil joy, Orlando asked Corinna if she would not tell them how she had done this wondrous work. For one, he could not rest until he knew.

"I will tell Florian," she replied, "and he may tell the story to you when he pleases."

"Dear Corinna," said our hero, himself burning with eager curiosity, "think how much we owe to these dear friends. I am willing they should all hear."

"If such be your command," returned Corinna, "I will speak."

"Such is my wish."

The woman reflected a few seconds and then spoke as follows:

"Florian, when you came to the robber's cave you were no stranger to me, as you shall see. When I was in the morning of my womanhood I saw and loved Bayard. It was a passion in which my whole soul was involved, and I went away with him—away from the quiet and happy home of my childhood, where lessons of virtue had been given to me by honest parents—went away never to enter it again—went away to find my lover a robber and an outlaw. But I did not forsake him. At the expiration of two years he was arrested and cast into prison, and I found service with a lady of Rome; and to that city I accompanied her. She was young, rich, and handsome. During the first two or three months of my residence with her in Rome I was not permitted to enter her private apartments, and I knew there was a domestic secret of some sort kept from me. But at length, when she could no longer hide from me the fact that she was soon to become a mother, she admitted me into her confidence, upon my taking a solemn oath never to betray her. Then I discovered that her husband was a monk of high rank. They had been solemnly married, and before heaven the husband claimed to feel that he had a right to marry; but he was forced to keep the fact from the brotherhood and from the church; for his hopes of advancement were high, and he knew if his marriage were made public his sacerdotal expectations would be crushed for ever.

"At length the wife gave birth to a male child; and certainly no father ever betrayed a stronger love for his offspring than did the monk—Father Bernalda he was called—show for this child. When the child had reached the age of eight months the mother fell ill and died. At one time I thought Bernalda would surely follow her to the grave; but in time he rallied, and until the child was a year and a half old I took care of it in its father's house. At that time the monk became sad and thoughtful, and finally he told me that he and his boy must be parted. 'I can never acknowledge him before the world,' he said to me; 'but if I keep him until he reaches the age of understanding, I shall be forced to do so.' In Syracuse he had a sister, and to this sister, at his request, I bore the child, and she adopted it. Afterwards this sister became the wife of the Senator Bozaria. She told her husband that the boy was the son of a Roman monk, but I do not believe she ever told him who the monk was; and I think she died with the secret kept as she had promised her brother she would keep it. And so have I retained the secret until the present time; and now I give it to you, earnestly praying that you will not spread it abroad. Florian, you were that boy."

"And my father?" asked the youth, trembling with anxiety.

"Was with me to-day," said Corinna, "and will return to-morrow. He holds you very near to his heart, as you will know ere long; but he dares not see you. He asks that you will regard him as one dead. Father Bernalda was your father, and there is no Father Bernalda now. He who once bore that name gave me this cross; and he asks that you will accept it, wear it about your neck, and pray for him when you pray for yourself."

Corinna took from her bosom a cross of fine gold, thickly set with diamonds and rubies, suspended upon a chain of the same material, and of most exquisite workmanship.

"The cross is doubly blessed," added Corinna, as Florian took it in his quivering hand; "and there is hardly a man in Christendom who would not give for it all his earthly fortune."

"But my father," said Florian. "You say he is no longer Bernalda."

"No longer Bernalda, my son."

"What is he called now?"

"Men call him now—Gregory."

"Gregory!" grasped our hero, quaking fearfully. "Is he—is he—"

"His Holiness, the Pope!" added Corinna, completing the sentence with words which Florian had not dared to speak. "So now you can understand why I wished to go to Rome; and why I was so sure of saving you if I could return before your life was taken. Gregory recognised me at once; and when I had told him all, and had assured him that his secret was safe—that even his son suspected not the truth—he donned his old garb of the order of Saint Basil, and straightway ordered one of his own ships, and set sail. The result you have seen. Our king met one to whom he was forced to bow the head and bend the knee."

Still trembling, and in an uncertain mood, Florian kissed the sacred emblem, and then hung it about his neck, after which he arose, and walked out into the garden.

In half-an-hour Electa went out to seek him, and she found him sitting, with bowed head, by a fountain. She spoke his name, and he looked up, and smiled.

"Dear Florian, are you happy?"

"Yes, Electa."

"Corinna's story has not distressed you?"

"No, dearest. I have reflected, and I am happier far—a thousand times happier—in this knowledge than I was in the old state of doubt and uncertainty."

While Electa was away in the garden, a strange idea entered Orlando's mind. He reflected, and told his plan to Corinna:

"I will go and bring the Lady Camilla hither. She shall not know that we have found Electa. I will bid her come and receive the thanks of Florian, and also confer with him touching the finding of her child. And we shall see if the mother and child will recognise each other."

Corinna highly approved of the plan, as did Athos and Dardinel; and they promised to say nothing to the maiden.

So Orlando hurried away, and when he had delivered his errand to Camilla she was eager to accompany him.

Florian and Electa had come in, and were conversing with Corinna upon the subject of her voyage, when Orlando entered and called Florian out, at the same time making a signal which the others understood, and they arose and followed their host. They were conducted to a closet adjoining the apartment they had left, and into which they could look through a small window.

While Electa was wondering why she had thus been left alone, a side-door was opened, and a lady entered.

"Pardon me, lady," said the new-comer. "I expected to find Orlando here."

Electa rose, met the visitor's gaze, and in an instant a violent tremor seized her. What was it she saw in that pale, sad face, so beautiful still, beneath the passage of years—so mild, so kind, and yet so prayerful and eager?

And what did the visitor behold? Whence the startling, thrilling emotion as she met the gaze of that lovely being? What was it in that sweet young face that awoke such wild and bewildering fancies? Was it the old dream, or was she really in Orlando's house, and this presence a thing of substance?

"Lady!—Speak! Who are you?" So whispered Camilla, putting forth her hand to hold the presence should it start to vanish away.

"I am called Electa."

"Oh! it is not a dream! My child! my child! Oh, heaven! what rapture is this!"

And Electa, clinging to the bosom whereon her head was pillowed, and winding her arms about the beautiful woman's neck, breathed for the first time in all the years of her understanding, in holy, truthful love, that most blessed name which a child can speak.

It needed not that Orlando should come in and tell to Electa that this was the Camilla of whom he had told her; it needed not that Corinna should come in and assure Camilla that this was the Electa whom Thalia had reared from early childhood. Their own hearts had probed the secret, and the love that had flashed forth so suddenly was the love of years—a love that had never died, but which, kept alive by

dreams and prayers, now burned as brightly and as purely as though no separation had ever come to darken so many years.

"Oh, Orlando, how could you so deceive me?"

But when Orlando explained why he had deceived her she freely forgave him. And when she regarded the youth whose life had been saved through her instrumentality, she had no thought but of joy and peace. Of course Camilla was admitted to the secret of Florian's birth; and when she had heard the story she made the most emphatic response with her power. She asked Florian if he would come and find a home beneath her roof; and when he had signified his assent, she placed the hand of her child within his grasp, saying, as she did so:

"This shall cement the bond between us."

What else we have to tell is simply matter of history.

In less than a year from the date of Florian's wonderful preservation, Vestales, worn down by constant fears of revolution and assassination, died; and Tiberius, having gained a lesson from the past, was willing to appoint a king from among the friends of the people.

The Roman Pontiff sent unto Tiberius a messenger with the request that one whom he loved and honoured should be made king of Syracuse; and with the request the Pope sent an offer of friendship that was of great value to the Byzantine Emperor.

And thus it came to pass that Florian sat upon the throne of Dionysius; and when he took the sceptre he made a vow that he would sway it for the good of his people. And he kept his word.

As for the banditti of the mountains, the bond of their union had been broken by the treachery of Timon, and most of them lay idle for several months, in the hope that Florian would come back and be their chieftain; but when they knew that the hero had been made king, they appeared before him upon their bended knees, imploring his pardon, and offering to him their services. Knowing well their worth, the king made proclamation of their pardon, and gave to them positions in the royal guard, of which Orlando was the chief commander.

Timon and Thalia were never seen again in Syracuse.

Corinna, having a powerful influence in her favour, gained admission to a convent, where she spent the evening of her days in works of love and good-will to the poor and the suffering wherever they were to be found; and among all the sources of satisfaction that were hers to enjoy, none yielded her so much pure and grateful pleasure as did the glorious awards of love and honour, which the people of Syracuse bestowed upon their youthful king.

THE END.

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE.

THE first report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the employment of children, young persons, and women in agriculture, presents a large amount of most interesting information as to the manners, customs, and resources of the agricultural population in various parts of the United Kingdom. This inquiry arose out of the disclosures recently made respecting the employment of public gangs of children in the Eastern Counties; and is directed to ascertain whether the young are extensively and injuriously employed in farm labour, and what the effect of such employment is upon their health and education.

The practice of employing young children appears to be extremely general; but the employment itself is in all cases precarious, occasional, and fluctuating. It is only when they are eleven and twelve years old that children begin to be of constant use. It would seem that the health does not generally suffer from farm labour; but very strong opinions are expressed that young boys of ten or eleven years of age ought not to be allowed to be exposed for many hours together during the winter months. If insufficiently clothed and fed, the circulation becomes impeded and the growth checked. It has been suggested that children of that age should not be employed out of doors between November and March; and it is satisfactory to find from Mr. Fraser that such an arrangement would produce little or no inconvenience.

Respecting the labour of women there is some conflict of opinion; but the state of things in Northumberland is worthy of special notice. Mr. Henley describes the Northumbrian women as a splendid race. They vie with the men in carrying sacks of corn; and there is no work, however hard, which affects them injuriously. Nor is the field work degrading; for these women, after they become wives and mothers, are excellent housekeepers. They re-

ceive a stranger with a natural courtesy and good manners which would astonish him, and the visitor will leave the cottage with a conviction that he has been in the presence of a thoughtful, contented, and unselfish woman. But the effect upon their health is equally satisfactory. They are said to be far more healthy and tenfold less affected by female complaints than those who remain indoors. The work fits them to be good bearers of children, and the strength even of town populations is kept up by them.

Some most interesting observations are made on the effects of various kinds of food. In Northumberland the working population live principally on porridge, crowdy (scalded oatmeal), barley, pea-flour, and bread; milk, cheese, butter, and home-fed bacon. They rarely touch butchers' meat; and they always have a hot meal in the middle of the day. In the South the diet has completely changed. "They eat a vast of meat." The butcher's cart is always on the road. Tea is substituted for milk and meal; indeed, the use of tea and coffee is excessive. In the opinion of many witnesses this change of food is deteriorating the health and physical strength of the people. Mr. Lumsden states that it now takes three men to do the work formerly done by two. The medical testimony is unanimous to the same effect, and in severe weather the result is sometimes very striking. Thus in 1864 the general rate of mortality in the Southern Division of the county was 18 per cent. higher than it was in the two preceding quarters; whilst in the Northern Division the rise in mortality was only 4 per cent.

The state of the cottages, the influences of allotments, the effect of education, are all described and discussed in the report; and it is abundantly evident that the old laws of Queen Elizabeth were wise and just, which compelled every person who built a cottage so appropriate to the use of the tenant a certain amount of land, and forbade him to take in lodgers, without he had sufficient accommodation to enable him to do so without violating the laws of decency and health.

FACETIÆ.

THERE is a tight-rope dancer in San Francisco who offers to walk across the ocean if somebody will chalk the equinoctial line for him. Due notice will be given when he starts.

ELECTION FACT.—All the waiters at the Trafalgar voted for Mr. Gladstone, in the hope that if he sat for Greenwich, he would lighten their labours at the ministerial dinner by reducing it to three courses.—*Punch*.

A CONSCIENTIOUS VOTER.

Agent: "How do you vote, Mr. Flanigan?"

Paddy: "I've heard somethin' about not giving me a new lease, Mr. O'Rourke, so I shall vote accordin' to my evictions!" ["Conventions" he would have said].—*Punch*.

FRANK.—At the first meeting of the Reform League after the fatal election day, Mr. Beales stated that he should have been elected if it had not been for the police, who hindered his friends. "This is not unlikely."—*Punch*.

LEVIATHAN.

"What admirable reasoners," said the meditative Brown, "our dishonest railway porters and other officials must be."

"Why do you say this?" said the inquisitive Jones.

"Have you read Hobbes?"

"Yes, but I fail to recall a passage illustrative of your proposition."

"He says that reason is the subtraction of parcels."—*Punch*.

"(NOT) THANKFUL FOR SMALL MERCIES."

Cat's-meat Man: "What 'a yer got for dinner to-day, Joe?"

Crossing-Sweeper: "Oh, a bit o' roast veal, sent me up from No. 6 in the crescent 'ere—an, yer wouldn't b'lieve it—not a morsel o' stuffin'—ah, 'an not so much as a slice o' lemon—and (with a sneer) calls themselves respect'ble people, I've no doubt!"—*Punch*.

"MISTAKES WILL HAPPEN."

Mamma (alarmed): "What is it, my darling?"

Pet: "Ya—ah, Boo—ooh—ah!"

Mamma: "What's the matter, then? Come and tell us own—"

Pet: "Ba—h—oo—h—she—she—did—wash me once—an'—says—she didn't—an'—she's been—an' gone an' washed me over again!"—*Punch*.

ZOOLOGICAL.—One of the Scotch papers made Lord Minto say that something or other was going to rise from its ashes "like a Sphinx." Well, it is

something to have spelled the word right, an achievement not common to the press. Of course, Lord Minto, who graduated at Trinity, did not say it, but he might as well have done so. Until Dr. Slater exhibits a Phoenix at the Zoological Gardens, as he will probably do next year (having now got everything else but that and a Kraken, which is coming), *Punch* declines to believe in any Phoenix but Himself.—*Punch*.

XXX CELLENT REASONS.

Free and Independent (to wavering Elector).—You don't admire his politics! Politics be blowed! Look at his principles! That man allus brew five-and-twenty bushels to the hoghead!—*Punch*.

HEALTH FOR ANGLIO-INDIANA.—The capabilities of the Himalayas, in a sanitary point of view, are undoubtedly pointed out by the *Times*. No doubt when roads and railways are extended to the hills, Englishmen and English troops will find health as much within their reach in India as in Europe. Still the recovery of health will be uphill work.—*Punch*.

SNUG.

Cheshire's six county conservative members have but three names amongst them. There is one Toller-mache, two Loghs, and three Egertons.

Another curiosity is, that there are two boroughs which return M.P.'s with the same names—Devonport and Marylebone both send a Chambers and a Lewis.—*Punch*.

NOT QUITE "COMB IL FAUT."

Foreign Friend (who went to buy a tortoiseshell comb): "Have you any of zeetle com' of yat you call mock turtle?"—*Punch*.

THE WORST OF WEALTH.—Rossini is stated to have left a fortune of two millions and a half of francs. Few composers have been so successful as he was in turning notes into cash. Fancy leaving a fortune of above two million francs! But perhaps that is what you wouldn't fancy. The worst of having made a large fortune is being obliged to leave it.—*Punch*.

SEE ADVERTISEMENT. "Who's your Lawyer?"—I haven't required one since I took the law into my own hands, kicked out my landlord, and told my servants that if they brought in any bills, I would discharge the bringers.—*Punch*.

LIBERAL TO A FAULT.

The Missus (affably): "My 'usban's out just now, sir. Can I give him any message?"

Liberal Candidate: "Ah—I have called with the hope that—ah—he'd promise me his vote at the approach—"

The Missus: "Oh, yes, sir. You're Cap'm Blythe, the 'Yellow.' I s'pose, sir! Yes, I'm sure he'll be most 'appy sir!"

The Captain (delighted): "Ya-as—I shall be much obliged to him—and—ah—he may depend upon my—"

The Missus: "Yes, I'm sure he'd promise you if he was at home, sir; 'cause when the two 'Blue' gents called and asked him the other day, sir, he promised 'em 'drectly, sir!"—*Punch*.

NEMESIS has been down upon Sir E. Watkin. He raised our railway fares, and is turned out of the Parliamentary train. Hoorey!—*Punch*.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

"Is Archbishop Tait's Christian name Richard?" asked a Ritualist on hearing of the appointment.

"No," replied Charles, his friend.
"I am glad of that," returned the self-willed Incenser; "because we won't be *Dic-tate* to by Canterbury."—*Punch*.

SOME CONSOLATION.—Many of those ladies who were disappointed at being refused the franchise are now contented to be without a vote; for they have been told that one of the questions electors are bound to answer at the polling booths is, "What is your age?"—*Punch*.

THE CURRENT COIN.—In the event of a contested election for Orkney and Shetland, it is understood that all bets are to be paid in "ponies."—*Punch*.

FOOD FOR CATTLE.—How luxurious living is spreading. The very beasts of the field are turning epicures. They have long had their appetites tempted with various delicacies in the form of "Foods," and now the last novelty in cookery for cattle is feeding them with cocoa; chocolate, we presume, being reserved for the more aristocratic animals—racehorses, prize oxen, successful south-downs, and the like. Rare times these for horses, cows, sheep, and pigs. No more common oats and hay; no more plain turnips and oil-cake and meal; but almonds and raisins, and asparagus nicely boiled with melted butter, and macaroons and pound-cake, and Ribeton pippins, and truffles (especially for the Pigs) with iced water, and lambs' wool and possets,

and all Sainsbury's summer beverages to drink. We do not despair of hearing that the times are so much improved, that even poor old rheumatic farm-labourers are able to enjoy a jorum of hot cocoa, sweet and strong, before they set out to walk four miles to their work on a raw November morning.—*Punch*.

THE REAL GREENWICH PENSIONER.—Mr. Gladstone.—*Tomahawk*.

THE STEP FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS.—From South Lancashire to Greenwich.—*Tomahawk*.

We understand that Sir John Pakington, in consideration of his great naval knowledge, will be offered the command of the Channel Fleet. Should he accept the post, we shall, no doubt, soon see the whole fleet start by the Overland Route for India. If he succeeds in accomplishing this feat, which has hitherto baffled all navigators, Sir John Pakington will be justly entitled to the gratitude of his country.—*Tomahawk*.

A GOOD REASON.

Dominie: "Why are you ill-using Dobree, Jones?"
Jones: "Cos he was cheeky, sir—called me names, sir—he said I was a Migg, sir!"

Dominie: "And, pray what is a Migg?"

Jones: "Well, sir!—I don't know, sir; but I thought I'd just kick him for it!"—*Fun*.

HELD IN SUSPENSION.—The inhabitants, who "look always on the Surrey side," to the Lambeth Company for water, declare that the liquid supplied them is of so villanous a character that it ought to be "turned off" by Calcraft instead of the turncock.—*Fun*.

LITERARY NOTICE.—Among the announcements of new books we find "Nature's Nobleman," by the author of "Rachel's Secret." Can this be a coincidence, or is the "curiosity" that took a certain lord to a certain Bond-street shop intentionally made one of the "Curiosities of Literature?"—*Fun*.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

"When I was young," said an old, black crow,

"My voice 'twas hard from the lark's to know."

"When I was young," said a grave jackdaw,

"Whene'er I spoke—it was with *éclat*!"

"When I was young," said an old dray-horse,

"My beauteous form,"—you believe, of course!

"When I was young," said an old, gray bear,

"The fawn stood back, and I shamed the hare!"

"In my young days," said an old, blind bat,

"My brilliant eyes, they amazed the cat!"

"When I was young," said a staid cat-fish,

"'Twas me they sought, for a dainty dish!"

"In my young days," said a belle *passé*,

"The girls had not such a forward way;"

"When I was young," said a *blanc* beau,

"Young men were not so conceited—no!"

"When I was young," said a grandseir, gray,

"A boy knew then, what it meant—*obey*!"

"When I was young," said a granddam, old,

"Young girls were fair—but they were not bold!"

"When I was young," said a palsied whale,

"I sank a fleet, if I moved my tail!"

"When I was young," said the king of beasts,

"Of chiefs and rulers I made my feasts!"

A strange refrain, which is ever sung,

By aged lips, to the youthful throng;

Who smile, amazed, as they close their ears,

But join the song, in the coming years! G. H.

GEMS.

A MAN in earnest finds means; or, if he cannot find, creates them.

Let friendship creep gently to a height. If it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.

It is a very good lesson, though it is learnt with difficulty, and rarely practised—to love those who hate us. Who can do it?

The poor man who envies not the rich, who pities his companions in poverty, and can spare something for him who is still poorer, is, in the realms of humanity, a king of kings.

"A GREAT lie," says the poet Crabbe, "is like a great fish on dry land; it may fret and fling, and make a frightful bother, but it cannot hurt you. You have only to keep still, and it will die of itself."

KILLED AND EATEN.—A private letter from New Zealand thus describes the fate of Major Von Tempsky, commandant of the mounted volunteers:—"Poor Von was shot dead whilst trying to carry off

one of his men who was wounded. One after the other four of the men tried to carry off his body, but were all shot dead. Thirty-six men were left either dead or wounded, and two fell alive into the hands of the natives, so out of the whole forty only two escaped. The worst is, all the killed and wounded fell into the hands of the tribes now in arms who are determined cannibals. We got a message from a chief calling himself the Archangel Michael, stating that he and his wife had put Von into a pot for soup, as he was too tough to eat. The first intimation his wife received of his death was passing a newspaper office in Auckland, where she read on a big placard, 'Horrible news from the south, Von Tempsky shot dead and his body eaten.' The poor woman fell into a fit, and has been out of her mind ever since. We drew out a subscription list for her, and forwarded it to the diggings. In three hours there were 1,000*l.* collected. I have no doubt 5,000*l.* will be collected for his widow, so popular a man was he in New Zealand."

STATISTICS.

THE total receipts on the railways in England and Wales amounted, in the year 1867, to 33,398,222*l.* and the total working expenses to 16,764,529*l.* or 50 per cent. of the receipts, leaving the net receipts 16,633,702*l.*, being an increase of 258,859*l.*, as compared with the net receipts of 1866.

The total receipts on 1928 miles of Irish railways for the year 1867, amounted to 1,872,619*l.* against 1,762,354*l.* on 1909 miles in 1866, showing an increase of 110,265*l.* of which 64,736*l.* was derived from passengers, &c., and 55,529*l.* from goods, minerals, and live stock: the total amount received for passengers, &c., having been 1,100,229*l.* against 1,045,493*l.* in 1866, and for goods, minerals, and live stock, 772,390*l.* against 716,861*l.* in the year 1866.

The total traffic receipts on 2282 miles of railway in Scotland, for the year 1867, amounted to 4,209,158*l.* against 4,127,131*l.* on 2244 miles in 1866, showing an increase of 82,027*l.* of which 31,140*l.* was for passengers, &c., and 50,887*l.* for goods, live stock, and minerals; the total receipts for passengers, &c., have been 1,627,273*l.* against 1,596,135*l.* in 1866; and for goods, live stock, and minerals 2,581,883*l.* against 2,530,956*l.* in 1866.

The total receipts on 10,087 miles of railway in England and Wales, for the year 1867, amounted to 33,398,222*l.* and for 1866, 37,011 miles of railway, to 32,274,869*l.* showing an increase of 1,123,353*l.* of which 453,833*l.* was derived from passenger, &c., traffic, and 669,520*l.* from goods, mineral traffic, and live stock. The total amount for passenger, &c., traffic being 15,208,130*l.* against 14,754,297*l.* in 1866; and for goods, mineral, and live stock traffic to 18,190,092*l.* against 17,520,572*l.* in 1866.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE wedding dress of Madlle. Candamo, a lady with a fortune of 400,000*l.*, cost 2,200*l.*

POTATOES, supposed to be seventy-seven years old were planted in Pennsylvania the last season, and yielded a good crop.

LONGEVITY among the generals continues. There are eight of the senior generals in the army bedridden, three speechless, all well past eighty.

AN Upper Canada paper boasts that there is in that Province a young lady twenty-three years old, who is seven feet and seven inches in height, and who weighs three hundred and seventy pounds.

SIR W. MANSFIELD has done a very good work in ordering that each regiment in India should have a regimental history. Why should it not be ordered for all the Army? The French regiments have ample historical records, and in Austria there is an actual historian, who is also the regimental lawyer.

THE late Baron James de Rothschild has left, by his will, an annuity of 100*l.* per annum to every clerk who has been ten years in his service. Such acts of liberality are extremely rare, and this, as it were, posthumous act of the Baron's, will cause him to be remembered with a kindly and grateful feeling in many a family long after the world has ceased to think or care about him.

THE whole of the statues are now placed in their respective niches in the ornamental arcade facing the Speaker's residence in New Palace Yard, in the following order, viz.:—Alfred the Great, William the Conqueror, Henry II., King John, Henry VIII., and William III. (Prince of Orange). The last two were placed on their pedestals a few days ago. These six statues are all the work of foreign sculptors.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

VALJEAN, A.P.—See our answer to "Charles B."

A CONSTANT READER.—We know nothing of the house you name.

A TALL BOATMAN.—See our second answer to "A Constant Subscriber."

DUDLEY.—Ranjit Singh, Chief of Lahore and Cashmere, was born in 1780, and died in 1839.

EVA.—Looking to others for our standard of happiness is the sure way to be miserable; our business is with our own hearts and motives.

FRANK GREEN.—Under the circumstances you name, a man could not legally marry another woman; without, indeed, he prove the fact in a lawsuit.

CHARLES B.—Avoid the person you name, and seek the advice of an ordinary medical practitioner, or that of a hospital surgeon.

E. E. G.—We know of no other method of obtaining the entire management of an astringent bread company's shop, except by advertising in the daily papers, or by application to a managing director or secretary.

A CONSTANT READER.—The ingredient you mention is procurable at any chemist's; if, after application, any irritation of the skin should arise, a little cold cream will in a few hours remove it.

YACOWITE.—We do not believe there would be any harm in using one of the electric chains; at the same time we would rather advise perfect faith in a good medical man, and a strict observance of all the ordinary rules of health.

A. H.—A man possessed of personal property, dying without a will, one-half goes to his widow, the other to his next of kin in equal degree. But the law or customs of copyhold vary. We do not think you have the slightest claim, but you would do well to consult a solicitor.

J. P.—A landlord is not liable to repair, except when he has agreed to do so. Where no agreement has been entered into, or stipulation made as to repairing, the tenant or lessee is liable to do all necessary repairs. Apply to the district surveyor.

G. H.—To take grease out of felt, procure some turpentine, and pour it over the part that is greasy; rub it till quite dry with a piece of clean flannel; if the grease be not quite removed, repeat the application, then brush the part well, and hang it up in the open air to take away the scent.

LAURETTA.—Straw hats may be dyed black, by boiling them three or four hours in a strong liquor of logwood, adding a little green copperas occasionally; let them remain in the liquor all night, then take them out to dry in the air; rub inside and out with a sponge moistened in fine oil, then block them.

JULIAN.—To promote the growth of the hair, take half-a-pound of beef marrow, soaked in several waters, melted and strained; 1 oz. of tincture of cantharides, (made by soaking for a week, 1 drachm of powdered cantharides in 1 oz. of proof spirit), and 12 drops of bergamot; mix well together, and rub occasionally into the roots of the hair.

JOHN AND JEMIE.—The promissory note is valueless in a marketable sense; without, indeed, you could get a second or third-rate solicitor to give you a certain sum, in order that he might obtain costs, even then you would have to await the coming due of the entire amount; with regard to the instalments, you can only apply to a County Court.

RACHAEL.—The "Magi" were a sect of learned philosophers, who resided together in communities, and devoted themselves to the study of abstract sciences. Their colleges were chiefly in Persia and Arabia; the term *Magi* signifies wise or learned men, and from it is derived the word magician, which originally bore the same meaning.

HELEN A. C.—1. Your landlord having accepted you as tenant in succession to your sister, and having also given you receipts in full for three years' subsequent rent, has no claim upon the goods. 2. Without doubt, your daughter could claim your property after your decease; but why not make a will at once, and so settle the question? You can purchase a "form" at any stationer's.

LITTLE ANNIE.—Our fair correspondent should remember she is an Englishwoman, and consult her own heart and abide by its dictates. Between a lover at home and another 15,000 miles away, she can surely decide. Were "Little Annie" our sister, we should advise her, if she prefers her distant lover, to write and tell him, that if she be worth having, she is worth fetching, and if he will not do this then marry the other.

J. D. F.—You ask us if we "consider it wrong for those who count themselves religious people to read novels in periodicals, like those which appear in our journal." The simplest and perhaps best reply is—that although, until a comparatively few years since, what is termed the "religious world" set their faces rigorously against works of fiction, the vast success gained by periodicals of our own class,

and the equally vast amount of good which they have done, in reforming the morals and substantially educating those of slender means, compelled the directors of religious periodicals of all denominations, to admit these works into their pages. How numerous are the novels admitted into the periodical conducted by Her Majesty's friend and chaplain, the Rev. Norman M'Leod, and also into several publications issued under the auspices of the directors of several religious societies! At first, the revered gentlemen demurred, but at length they were compelled to bow to the great tendency of the age, to teach and improve by means of fiction. Can it be denied that Miss Edgeworth and a host of other ladies who taught, and are still teaching, the pure and good by means of fiction, were religious? Was not Archbishop Fensel a novelist? Did our space admit, we could name hundreds of the purest-minded and most religious, who have written fiction. In fact, the novel now is one of the greatest of teachers, and is used by clergymen, politicians, indeed, every class, as a medium, for the public dissemination of his or her principles.

A. B. C.—1. To remove superfluous hair, it should be perseveringly plucked out by the roots, and the skin having been washed twice a day with warm soft water, without soap, should be bathed with milk of roses. 2. You are perfectly right respecting your handwriting, it is bad; but procure some good printed copies, and endeavour to imitate them carefully and perseveringly, and, no doubt you will in time improve.

A CONSTANT SUBSCRIBER.—1. To darken the hair, the juice of the walnut husk, sold by manufacturing perfumers, is considered good, as it darkens, without dyeing it; it requires to be applied repeatedly during several weeks, and the change, though slow, is thus more natural and unobserved. 2. To remove pimples, an astringent lotion is useful, and may be made with 20 grains of sulphate of copper, 4 oz. of rose-water, mixed with 19 oz. of pure water; the pimples must be first rubbed with a rough towel, and then bathed with the lotion.

J. E. T.—Having taken the premises, knowing the existence of the evils of which you complain, your only course is to make a formal complaint to the Inspector of Nuisances of your district; who will, without doubt, remedy them. A better course would, in your case, be to apply to the Sanitary Inspector of the Local Board of Health, whose duty it is to attend immediately to the case, and to bring it before the Board of Health or a magistrate.

HIDDEN LOVE.

There was a love, so pure and deep,
It had no home on earth.

It cast its light o'er days of gloom,
Its shade o'er hours of mirth.

Sorrow and joy were incomplete,
Without this love of mine.

Yet silent and alone closed around
Its lone and secret shrine.

Its memory rose in brilliant scenes,
And conjured up the past.

And over sad and gloomy hours
A ray of glory cast;

It haunted every onward step,
With music pure and strong,

And echoed through my heart and life,
Like some undimmed song.

Unfinished here! but oh! beyond
This world of change and care

I place the love, so wasted here,
To be safe treasured there;

Where all of deep and pure and true,
Given on this earth in vain,

Far deeper, purer, truer, still,
Shall be restored again!

E. A. B.

W. W. W.—A general notice of retirement of a partner is sufficient as regards the world at large, but an express notice is requisite to previous customers. Upon the dissolution of a partnership, each partner should take care to announce the dissolution in the *London Gazette*, remove his name from the premises, send circulars to customers, and do all in his power to make known the dissolution; for any neglect of the kind will make him still liable, in the event of one or more of the members carrying on the trade.

L. L.—"St. Paul's Cross," which existed before the Cathedral, was a pulpit formed of wood, mounted upon steps of stone, and covered with lead, from which the most eminent divines were appointed to preach every Sunday, in the forenoon; to this place the Court, mayor, aldermen, and chief citizens used to resort. It was in use in 1259, and was appropriated, not only to instruct by preaching, but to every purpose, political or ecclesiastical. Jane Shore was brought before this Cross in 1455, divested of all her splendour; it was destroyed by order of the Parliament in 1643.

DEAFNESS.—All the symptoms of which you complain arise from the one cause. Be warned in time; if you would be restored to health, avoid all quacks and nostrums; apply to a medical man, or hospital surgeon, if you cannot afford the expense of an ordinary medical practitioner, and strictly abide by his advice and directions. The only prescription we can give is healthy occupation for mind and body, a tepid sponge bath every morning, and temperance in eating and drinking; if your appetite has failed, apply to a chemist or dispensary for a tonic mixture (that is a preparation of quinine or iron).

T. J. C.—Inasmuch that you must be the best judge of your capacity and opportunities, we cannot advise you how to obtain evening employment. That you can "sing a good song, without knowing ought of music" is sufficient proof that you are unfit for employment at a music hall, and, at the same time, in a dangerous position for a young man who has to gain his livelihood by the sweat of his brow, for the aptitude without the training will only lead you to grief. Suppress your desire to "come out," and employ your evenings in some amusement that may lead to profit, if you have any real metal in you.

A. M. B.—By the Wills Act (1833) it is enacted that no will shall be valid unless in writing, and signed at the foot or end thereof by the testator, or by some other person in his presence, or by his direction, and such signature shall be made or acknowledged by the testator in the presence of two or more witnesses, present at the same time; and such witnesses must attest and subscribe the will in the presence of the testator. Hence, you see, that what you call a "note

of hand" would not answer the same purpose as a "will." Moreover, such a proceeding would be foolish in the extreme, since you can purchase a printed form at any law stationer's.

CLARICE EULALIE M'DONALD.—1. There is, perhaps, scarcely a spot of any note in England, that is without its legendary lore. Hence the reason you fail to find the facts you mention in the History of Hanley, they being, in the historian's estimation, unworthy of credence. 2. A woman cannot use a great, although an helmsman may wear arms. 3. The best way to thicken the eyebrows is to rub a little good pomade into them on retiring to rest; it may be made as follows:—4 oz. of castor oil, 2 oz. of prepared lard, 3 oz. of white wax, 3 drachms of bergamot, 20 drops of oil of lavender. Melt the fat together, and when cool add the scents, and stir till cold. 4. To remove corns, boil a potato in its skin, and after it is boiled take the skin and put the inside of it to the corn, and leave it on for about twelve hours. 5. Handwriting very good.

A BRUNETTE, eighteen, and good looking.

NELLIE and SUSIE—"Nellie," twenty-two, tall, and dark "Susie," sixteen. Respondents must be industrious.

ADA FLORENCE, eighteen, medium height, fair; golden hair, blue eyes, and would make a home comfortable.

P—M—N, seventeen, short, fair, pretty, and musical. Respondent must be a tradesman, a grocer preferred.

WILLIAM GLOVER, twenty, medium height, fair, a clerk with 300l. per annum. Respondent must be musical.

W. ASHTON (a seaman), twenty-two, medium height, and auburn hair. Respondent must be respectable.

CHARLES MATTHEW, tall, dark hair and eyes, and a tradesman. Respondent must be tall, handsome, fond of home and about twenty.

GENEVIÈVE and GERTRUDE—"Geneviève," tall, dark, lady-like, and good looking. "Gertrude," rather short, dark eyes, fair, chestnut hair, domesticated, but has no fortune.

HENRY ARNOLD, nineteen, tall, fair, and pretty, and daughter of a respectable tradesman. Respondent must be dark, and rather tall.

LOUISE M., seventeen, fair, medium height, and very respectable, about nineteen or twenty.

JOHN HENRY HOLMES, twenty-six, dark hair, 4 ft. 2 in., and very fond of home. Respondent must be fair, and have a little money.

JEANETTE, fair, blue eyes, light hair, good-tempered, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall and dark, about nineteen or twenty.

D. JENKINSON, nineteen, a clerk in receipt of a fair salary, 5 ft. 5 in., dark hair and eyes, and domesticated. Respondent must be fair, fond of home and music; money no object.

HARRIET M., eighteen, tall, dark, and very pretty, with money. Respondent must be a tradesman, fond of home and good looking.

ERMINIE, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, very fair, accomplished, thoroughly domesticated, of a lively disposition, and handsome. Respondent must be tall, dark, of a good family, and affectionate.

POLLY W. and MARY—"Polly W.," twenty, 5 ft. fair, dark, gray eyes, black hair, pretty, and domesticated. "Maude," seventeen, 5 ft. 4 in., dark brown eyes and hair, and domesticated.

KATE and POLLY—"Kate," dark brown hair and eyes, with 100l. a-year, good tempered, and handsome. "Polly," nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, and good looking, with 100l. a-year.

FLYING STAY (a seaman gunner), 5 ft. 8 in., dark, good-tempered, and fond of home. Respondent must be of a respectable family, good-looking, able to read and write; a housemaid preferred.

WILLIAM MORTIMER, twenty-one, a clerk in receipt of a fair salary, 5 ft. 7 in., fair hair and whiskers, domesticated, and fond of music. Respondent must be fair, about eighteen, fond of home, and of refined tastes.

ADA and EDITH—"Ada," twenty, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good figure, very affectionate, and domesticated. "Edith," twenty, medium height, a good figure, blue eyes, light hair, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondent must be tall, good-looking, and respectfully connected.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

WILLIE is responded to by—"Lizzie."

GERTRUDE ALICE by—"A. S.," twenty-three, tall, dark, curly hair, good looking, and possesses a comfortable home and a good business.

ANNIE by—"Charles," twenty-two, 5 ft. 6 in., dark, a musician, and has a good business besides.

MERRY JEMIE by—"Harry," twenty-one, 5 ft. 3 in., fair complexion and whiskers, and has a little money.

MAUDE by—"Z. Z.," eighteen, 5 ft. 4 in., dark, well-educated, fond of home, and speaks French fluently.

HARRIET by—"Claude," eighteen, a clerk on the railway, and—"Thomas L.," twenty-one, tall, respectfully connected, dark hair and eyes.

MOSS ROBERT by—"W. C. H.," twenty-four, tall, dark, good-looking, affectionate, and respectable.

HCON DE LIZIE by—"Christine," sixteen (a young lady), 5 ft. 1 in., black hair and eyes, pretty, and good tempered, but not very domesticated. Handwriting rather too small to be distinct.

W. J. by—"Annie," nineteen, 5 ft. 4 in., dark brown hair and eyes, and lady-like.

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